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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Big Dig project: The Massachusetts water authority is investigating whether the Big Dig highway project violated its permit by pumping millions of gallons of water into the regional sewer system.

The \$14.6 billion Big Dig project has a permit from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority to pump out 36,000 gallons of water per month from tunnels under Boston. But MWRRA records obtained by The Boston Globe show the project has been pumping out a monthly average of 2.2 million gallons.

The MWRRA's investigation could result in fines for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, the agency overseeing the project.

DEA agent's slaying: U.S. authorities took custody Saturday of a man who was arrested 4½ years ago in Mexico and accused of killing an undercover federal drug agent, the Drug Enforcement Administration said. Augustin Vasquez-Mendoza is facing a murder charge in Maricopa County, Ariz., for the 1994 slaying of DEA agent Richard Fass.

Vasquez-Mendoza was arrested in central Mexico in July 2000, and the United States had been seeking his extradition ever since.

Cruise ship illnesses: About 230 people aboard a cruise ship fell ill with a gastrointestinal illness while on a Caribbean voyage, forcing the trip to end early.

About 200 of the 1,220 passengers aboard the Holland America ship Veendam got sick on the voyage, which ended Friday evening in Tampa, about 13 hours early.

About 30 of the ship's 572 crewmembers also became sick.

World

Bloodshed in Congo: Militiamen carrying guns and machetes killed 16 people last week and kidnapped at least 34 young girls in a series of attacks on a remote area of eastern Congo, the United Nations said.

Two platoons of U.N. peacekeepers arrived in the remote area by helicopter early Saturday to protect the population from further violence, U.N. spokesman Christophe Boulierarch said by telephone from Bunia, capital of Ituri province.

Consulate attack: The U.S. consulate in the Red Sea port city of Jiddah has reopened, seven weeks after an attack on its premises by Islamic militants left nine people dead, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Em-



Bangladesh strike: Police detain a woman protester Sunday during the second day of a three-day general strike called by the main opposition Awami League in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Schools and shops were shut down and transportation was disrupted after the killing of five members in a grenade attack at a rally Thursday. The government denied any involvement, condemned the blast and ordered an investigation. Investigators from Interpol were to arrive Monday. Officials also asked the United States for assistance.

bassy in Riyadh said Sunday.

Carol Kalin said the consulate reopened Saturday and was providing full services in the western region of Saudi Arabia.

Islamic militants attacked the consulate Dec. 6 and held civilians at gunpoint. Security forces stormed the compound three hours later, and five foreign consulate employees and four attackers were killed.

Oil prices stay high: OPEC warned Sunday that oil prices, already hovering near \$50 a barrel, would remain high through the spring, even as the cartel decided to keep its production ceiling at 27 million barrels a day.

The decision, reached at a meeting of the 11-nation group in the Austrian capital of Vienna, offers little solace for consumers worried about the price of heating oil.

Darfur crisis: Rebels in Sudan's western Darfur region called Sunday for the African Union to send more troops to Darfur and give the soldiers the mandate to stop governing troops and allied militia from attacking civilians.

The Sudanese government is sending more troops and military hardware to Darfur, continues arming and recruiting Arab militia, known as Janjaweed, and has built airstrips in remote parts of the region to prepare for new offensives against insurgents, said Adam Ali Shogar, a spokesman for the Sudan Liberation Movement, one Darfur's two main rebel groups.

War on terrorism

Hunt for Taliban chief: Police have gleaned "useful" information from suspected members of Afghanistan's Taliban militia who were arrested in southwestern Pakistan and are being interrogated for clues about Taliban chief Mullah Mohammed Omar, an official said Sunday.

Acting on a tip, police raided several homes in Quetta late Thursday and captured as many as 23 Afghan nationals on suspicion of links with the Taliban and al-Qaida.

Seventeen of the arrested men were allegedly members of the Taliban militia.

British Gtmo detainees: Britain made no promises to the United States to secure the release of four Britons from U.S. military detention at Guantanamo Bay, the government's chief legal officer said Sunday.

The comments by Lord Falconer, the lord chancellor, appeared to contradict those of another minister, who said Britain had agreed on a "security package" with the United States over the men's release.

Four British detainees returned to Britain on Tuesday. British police questioned them briefly and released them without charge.

Military

AF cadet to stand trial: An Air Force Academy senior cadet will stand trial for allegedly raping another cadet during a scuba diving trip.

Lt. Gen. John Rosa, the academy superintendent, ordered the court-martial of senior Cadet Benjamin Kuster after reviewing evidence from November's Article 32 proceeding, the equivalent of a preliminary hearing. An academy spokesman announced the court-martial on Friday.

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Iraqis vote in first free election despite violence

44 killed in attacks at polls

BY MARIAM FAM

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraqis defied violence and calls for a boycott to cast ballots in Iraq's first free election in a half-century Sunday. Insurgents seeking to wreck the vote struck polling stations with a string of suicide bombings and mortar volleys, killing at least 44 people, including nine attackers.

Women in black abayas whispered prayers at the sound of a nearby explosion as they waited to vote at one Baghdad polling station.

But the mood for many was upbeat: Civilians and policemen danced with joy at one of the five polling stations where photographers were allowed, and some streets were packed with voters walking shoulder-to-shoulder to vote. The elderly made their way, hobbling on canes or riding wheelchairs; one elderly woman was pushed along on a wooden cart, another man carried a disabled 80-year-old on his back.

"This is democracy," said Kar-

fia Abbasi, holding up a thumb stained with purple ink to prove she had voted.

Officials said turnout among the 14 million eligible voters appeared higher than the 57 percent that had been predicted, although it would be some time before any turnout figure was confirmed. No preliminary results were expected before Monday at the earliest, and final results will not be known for seven to 10 days, the election commission said.

Polls were largely deserted all day in many cities of the Sunni Triangle north and west of the capital, particularly Fallujah, Ramadi and Beiji. In Baghdad's mainly Sunni Arab area of Azamiyah, the neighborhood's four polling centers did not open at all, residents said.

A low Sunni turnout could undermine the new government that will emerge from the vote and worsen tensions among the country's ethnic, religious and cultural groups.

Casting his vote, interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi called it



Above: An Iraqi man gets help from a U.S. Army medic Sunday after he was shot in the face by an insurgent near a polling station in Mosul, Iraq. He was rushed to a local hospital and is expected to survive. **Right:** A member of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq casts his ballot in eastern Ramadi, Iraq.

"the first time the Iraqis will determine their destiny."

With Arabs across the Middle East watching the vote, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak telephoned Allawi to congratulate him on the election, saying he hoped it would "open the way for the restoration of calm and stability."

Prominent Iraqi Sunni politician Adnan Pachachi — who in recent months had called for the vote to be postponed because of violence — told CNN he was "relieved" and "encouraged" by a turnout he said was better than expected, even in Fallujah and Mosul.

Shiite Muslims, estimated at 60 percent of Iraq's 26 million people, were expected to vote in large numbers, encouraged by clerics who hope their community will gain power after generations of oppression by the Sunni minority.

Voting appeared heavy in Shiite and mixed Shiite-Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad, but low in some heavily Sunni areas.

for the administration to withdraw some troops now and to begin to negotiate a phase-down of our long-term military presence," Kennedy added.

Earlier Sunday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the elections are a first step to a brighter democratic future for a country once held under the thumb of tyranny.

Iraqis will now work to reduce ethnic or sectarian differences, and the United States will discuss the need for outside security forces with the newly elected Iraqi government, Rice said.

"The insurgency is not going to go away as a result of today," she said, "but the Iraqi people have taken a very important step in losing the sense of fear and intimidation that has been in their lives for decades," under deposed leader Saddam Hussein.



JOSEPH GORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Sunnis in mixed neighborhoods may have voted in greater numbers there because pressure to boycott was less intense — and chances of retaliation lower because they would not stand out at the polls. There are few ways by sight to distinguish Sunni and Shiite Arabs.

The election will create a 275-member National Assembly and 18 provincial legislatures. The assembly will draw up the country's permanent constitution and will select a president and two deputy presidents, who in turn will name a new prime minister and Cabinet to serve for 11 months until new elections are held.

The election is a major test of President Bush's goal of promoting democracy in the Middle East. If successful, it also could hasten the day when the United States brings home its 150,000 troops. A Marine was killed in combat Sunday in Iraq's restive Anbar province.

Guerrilla attacks began within two hours of the balloting's start Sunday morning. All but one of the day's suicide attacks came in Baghdad, mostly against polling sites, using bombers on foot with explosives strapped to their bodies since private cars were banned from the streets.

The group al-Qaida in Iraq claimed responsibility for election-day attacks in a Web statement, although the claim could not be verified. A few hours after polls closed at 5 p.m., thunderous explosions reverberated through central Baghdad, though their cause was unknown.

A ticket endorsed by the country's leading Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, is expected to fare best among the 111 candidate lists. However, no faction is expected to win an outright majority, meaning possibly weeks of political deal-making before a new prime minister is chosen.



An Iraqi woman holds up her voting card to the light Sunday at a polling station in the center of Az Zubayr in southern Iraq.

Bush: Iraq election a success

BY ANNE GEARAN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush called Sunday's elections in Iraq a success and promised the United States would continue trying to prepare Iraq to secure their own country.

"The world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East," Bush told reporters at the White House on Sunday, four hours after the polls closed.

Bush praised the bravery of Iraqis who turned out to vote despite continuing violence and intimidation. Bush said they "firmly rejected the antidemocratic ideology" of terrorists.

Insurgents struck polling stations with a string of suicide bombings and

mortar volleys, killing at least 44 people, including nine suicide bombers.

"Some Iraqis were killed while exercising their rights as citizens," Bush said. He also mourned the loss of American and British troops killed Sunday. "Their sacrifices were made in a vital cause of freedom."

Bush cautioned that the election will not end violence in Iraq, but said U.S. forces will continue training and helping Iraqis "so this rising democracy can eventually take responsibility for its own security."

In a statement Sunday, Democratic Sen. Edward M. Kennedy said Bush "must look beyond the election."

"The best way to demonstrate to the Iraqi people that we have no long-term designs on their country is

At least 10 dead after British C-130 crashes

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A British C-130 military transport plane crashed Sunday north of Baghdad, scattering wreckage over a large area, officials said. At least 10 troops were killed, Britain's Press Association news agency said.

The crash occurred at around 5:25 p.m. about 20 miles northwest of Baghdad, a spokesman for the British Ministry of Defense, Press Association quoted unidentified military sources saying the death toll was "around 10" and it was "highly unlikely" to be more than 15.

Prime Minister Tony Blair paid tribute to the casualties in a televised speech praising Iraq's election. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives today."

The plane was flying from Baghdad to the town of Balad, a U.S. military official said. Helicopters were at the scene and observing the wreckage, which was scattered over a large area, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

U.S. troops report less violence in Baghdad

Neighborhoods in capital city experience high voter turnout

BY JASON CHUDY
Stars and Stripes

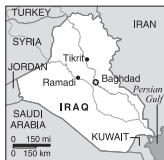
BAGHDAD — There was less violence and more voting.

Tenth Mountain Division soldiers assigned to the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment said that voter turnout was high in the three Baghdad neighborhoods of Kadhimiya, Shulla and Hurriya, and insurgent attacks were less than expected.

"It's certainly not the level of violence we expected," said 1st Lt. Brian Wood, executive officer for Company C. "It's definitely worse than a normal day, but there are a lot more targets [for insurgents] out there."

Rocket, mortar and gunfire echoed throughout the area all day. None of the battalion's soldiers was injured. But it wasn't quiet everywhere in Iraq's capital and largest city.

In an adjoining sector patrolled by the 91st Engineer Battalion, a man detonated a bomb



AP/Stars and Stripes

at a polling site, killing only himself. Radio reports received by 4-31st soldiers stated that after the attack, Iraqis placed the suicide bomber's head, which was still intact, on his severed foot and passing voters spit on the remains.

Even after some polling stations were attacked, voters would often continue to arrive to cast their ballots.

Soldiers from the battalion,



JASON CHUDY/Stars and Stripes

First Lt. Daniel Murd, left, and Sgt. 1st Class James Shinholt talk to election officials and Iraqi police officers Sunday at a polling site in Baghdad. The soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment visited a number of polling sites to check on security.

which had 125 polling sites in its sector, were out in force during the entire 10-hour voting period, and they spent more time dodging soccer balls than fighting in-

surgents. The government had imposed a driving ban for all but official vehicles; so most of the city's younger men took advantage of the ban

to set up impromptu soccer fields on the streets, using rocks or sets of shoes as goal posts.

SEE BAGHDAD ON PAGE 5

After a slow start, rural residents get busy voting

BY TERRY BOYD
Stars and Stripes

OMYER AHMAD AS SAMIR, Iraq — Master Sgt. Joseph Lieberman loves coming to the villages on the forlorn plains 30 miles east of Tikrit. The people, says Lieberman, a civil affairs soldier attached to the 1st Infantry Division, are genuine and friendly, unlike the people in the urban areas here near Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit.

Even on election day.

Like Tikrit, people on the plains are Sunni, and the area is still part of the Sunni Triangle, the most dangerous region for coalition forces. But following the lead of their sheiks — cultivated by soldiers and officers from the Schweinfurt, Germany-based Troop C, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st ID — rural Sunnis apparently voted in droves in Sunday's elections.

Soldiers from 1-4 Cavalry drove across eastern Iraq from Forward Operating Base Wilson near Tikrit, picking up nearly 7,000 ballots in an area with 20,000 residents. "That's better than the U.S.," Maj. Keith Barclay, FOB Wilson executive officer, said of voter turnout.

The drive was eerily serene, with no traffic either way on the 60-mile round trip drive because of a nationwide ban of driving Sunday to curb possible suicide car bombings.

As Barclay entered al-Badeiya School, polling place 27 in a village a few miles east of Tikrit, a sheik said 2,500 people have voted in the sparsely populated area.

When Barclay told the sheik that in Jilam, home to insurgent leader Ibrahim Al-Douri, one person voted, the gaggle of police, soldiers and villagers broke out in laughter.

"Well, maybe they didn't have as good a security as you," Barclay said, surrounded by dozens of assault-rifle wielding Iraqi soldiers and police.



PHOTOS BY TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

Above: Maj. Keith Barclay, from left, Master Sgt. Joseph Lieberman and Sheik Hajim walk from a polling station outside Tikrit, Iraq, after Barclay presented one of the sheik's security personnel with a medal for his contribution to the elections. Right: Sgt. Reyes Terrazas lifts a box of ballots, some of about 2,700 cast in a village east of Tikrit.

It was a rare moment of levity in what was otherwise deadly serious business. Al-Douri and other insurgents swore to make the streets run red with blood during the election.

As for Al-Douri, "some people still think he's out there somewhere," said Master Sgt. Steven Ziebarth, non-commissioned officer in charge at FOB Wilson, gesturing toward the dry washes around Omyer Ahmad as Samir.

Although FOB Wilson's area of responsibility was relatively quiet for the election, there were incidents.

On Saturday, a sniper wounded an Iraqi soldier based at FOB Wilson.

Another insurgent tried to put a pipe bomb in a building a few meters from a polling station in Omyer Ahmad as Samir. Iraqi police and soldiers opened up on him, firing hundreds of rounds, but failing to kill him, Ziebarth said. American ordnance disposal soldiers destroyed the bomb, he said.

Soldiers worked hard to cultivate local tribal sheiks to bolster security and to improve their way through several mass murders by Iraqi poll workers.



The busy Iraqi vote-monitoring center at FOB Wilson tracked the uneven turnout.

In Ad-Dawr, next to FOB Wilson, three of four Sunni-neighborhood voting stations recorded zero votes as of noon Sunday, while nearby Shiite neighborhoods had modest turnouts.

But by 9 a.m. — two hours after the voting started, it was clear the sheiks' areas were swamped with voters. "I'm really excited about that. I'm really excited," Barclay said as the numbers came in. "This is really a big deal."

As his soldiers picked up ballots, Barclay said he was confident that the votes are legitimate because the sheiks involved have always been reliable. "We've worked with them since Day One."

As the 14-soldier team prepared to leave FOB Wilson at about 2 p.m. to pick up ballot boxes, Barclay reminds the soldiers the job was almost finished.

"There's been a lot of stress," he said. "When we get the ballots back to FOB Wilson, then it will have been a successful election."

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JOSEPH GIORANDO/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. LaTasha Boyd, of the 2nd Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, does a security check on the first female voter at one of the polling stations in Ramadi, Iraq. Security concerns in the city were expected to keep voter turnout low.

Baghdad: A historic election

BAGHDAD, FROM PAGE 4

Interrupting game after game, soldiers from the battalion's three companies and others from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment visited polling sites throughout the day to check on security.

They didn't spend much time at any, said 1st Lt. Daniel Hurd, Company A, 2-14th's executive officer. Site security was entirely handled by Iraqi soldiers and police.

At one point a patrol from Com-

pany A passed a handful of armored personnel carriers from an Iraqi mechanized unit on one of the main north-south streets through the Kadhimiya district. Pedestrians waved and cheered as the Iraqi troops passed.

"I've seen more [Iraqi National Guard] in the past three days than I have in the entire time in country," Wood said.

Not only was Iraqi security seen in large numbers throughout the district, but so were voters.

"Based on the reports received during the day ... I'd say there was a 75 percent turnout," said battalion commander 1st Lt. Col. John Spitzer, as he stopped at a forward patrol base shortly before the end of the elections.

By 11 a.m. reports had reached the battalion command post at Camp Justice that some polling sites were running out of ballots.

Throughout the small section of Baghdad, people walked around with blackened right index fingers, the identifying mark of those who have voted.

Soldiers took pictures and videos of Iraqis dancing and singing outside of the polling sites after they cast their votes.

Soldiers seemed less enthusiastic about the elections than the Iraqis in Baghdad, possibly exacerbated by an increased pace of operations leading up to Sunday's vote.

"I think there's mixed feelings," said Staff Sgt. Scott Price of Company A, 2-14th, about election day finally arriving. "The longer they've been here the less they care. They do care because it's their job right now."

And with a higher voter turnout than hoped, and a smaller amount of insurgent attacks than expected, the soldiers' worst fears weren't realized here.

"It's 100 percent better than everything we expected," said Company C's Spc. Steven Ealy. "It's much ado about nothing."

Staff Sgt. Shawn Bush added, "It's like Y2K was."

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BY JOSEPH GIORANDO
Stars and Stripes

RAMADI, Iraq — Security concerns, roadside bombs and a series of brief gunbattles kept most Ramadi citizens from participating in Sunday's historic Iraqi elections.

One U.S. soldier was killed and at least two others injured by a roadside bomb around 3 a.m. Sunday, according to military officials. In another attack at noon, a Humvee patrolling less than 200 meters from a polling station was hit by another bomb, sending a huge plume of smoke into the sky.

The Humvee crew all escaped with minor wounds, but the explosion touched off long bursts of machine-gun fire from Iraqi and American troops manning security positions at the nearby polling site, a large grammar school compound.

According to soldiers who were observing from a nearby rooftop position, the second roadside bomb was planted by a teenage boy who ran into the street and dropped a large plastic bag just moments before a U.S. patrol drove through.

For long minutes after the explosion, ammunition from the Humvee continued to cook off and fire into the air.

Before the explosion, 75 people — including Independent Electoral Commission of Iraqi poll workers and special police comman-

dos protecting the site — had voted at the school in eastern Ramadi, U.S. military officials said. At midmorning, the nearby streets had been full of curious residents watching voters walk to the polling station. After the explosion and gunfire, the streets were deserted and no other voters came.

Ramadi's 400,000 residents were subject of a harassment campaign by insurgents, who promised death to anyone who voted Sunday.

At another polling site in the Sofiya district of Ramadi, the polls were more active. More than 100 people had voted by early afternoon, officials said. There were eight polling stations in the city of Ramadi, U.S. and Iraqi officials said, and they estimated that about 1,000 people cast ballots during the day.

"I'll never forget this day," said Pfc. Brandon Bell, a 19-year-old infantryman from Napa, Calif., who had been manning the polling entrance closest to the second Humvee explosion.

Bell and another soldier with Company C, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment felt small pieces of shrapnel land on their pieces after the explosion.

The first Iraqis to vote in Ramadi were the security forces and election workers, who began casting their ballots just after the polls opened at 7 a.m. The first

two civilian voters came in at 8 a.m., and they were followed shortly after by a group that included two women.

In a tent near the polling station entrance, three female soldiers from the 2nd Forward Support Battalion — which deployed from South Korea along with 4,200 other U.S. troops last fall — helped perform security checks on the female voters who arrived. Iraqis who voted said through interpreters they were proud to have participated in a day they thought would never happen. The first two women who voted — arriving in long black robes and headresses — repeatedly said thanks to Allah and shook nearly every hand in sight.

When one of the women placed her ballot in the large plastic collection bin, she turned her eyes and palms skyward, uttering a short prayer.

Soldiers and Marines in Iraq certainly knew they were part of something historic, despite the low turnout in Ramadi.

"I had grandfathers who fought in Korea and World War II, and I don't think they really knew they were doing something special at the time," said Marine Lance Cpl. Christopher Green, a dog handler attached to the 1-503rd for election day.

"But I think guys know this is big. This is something important."

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JASON CHUDY/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. Dustin White, medic with 1st Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, stands next to his Humvee on Election Day on Sunday. Posters for the many Iraqi political parties running in the election are pasted on the nearby bridge support.



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Region rejoices in Iraq voting

BY JAMIE TARABAY

The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — People across the Middle East said Iraq's election Sunday sent a strong message to insurgents that they cannot win, though many expressed concern the chaos would not allow for a truly representative result.

The United States hoped the polls would set an example for people across the region, bringing democracy to a region filled with little experience of free and fair elections.

The Abu Dhabi-based daily *Al-Arabia* was jubilant, declaring "The new Iraq is born today" on its front page.

Other newspapers were more guarded, concerned about the ongoing chaos and violence in the country.

"We don't want to drown in optimism," Qatar daily *Al-Sharq* said. "For we know that the elections in Iraq aim for democracy, but it is not held in such an atmosphere."

Iraqis casting absentee ballots in nearby countries said the vote showed the Iraqi people would not let the insurgents dominate the country.

"This is a clear and loud message that Iraqis inside and outside are united in defeating terrorism," said Mansour Ibrahim as he entered a polling station in the upscale Sufriya neighborhood in Amman, Jordan.

The Arab News newspaper in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia called the vote "a very historic moment in the country's long history" and said it was "a much needed victory for moderation."

The Syrian government was also keenly watching developments in its neighbor. One Syrian analyst warned that the security situation could worsen if some ethnicities were underrepresented in the 275-member National Assembly.

"These elections... do not represent all Iraqi sects, which means the security situation will not settle down soon, and could cause instability in the rest of the region," said analyst Imad Shoubi.



An Iraqi casts his vote Sunday at a polling station in Mosul, Iraq.

Taste of freedom in 'triangle of death'

BY ELLEN KNICKMEYER

The Associated Press

ASKAN, Iraq — In the "triangle of death," where voting is a life-threatening experience, Karfiya Abbas held up her ink-stained finger, elated that for the first time she has been able to cast a ballot for someone besides Saddam Hussein.

"This is democracy," Abbas said. "This is the first time I feel freedom."

For U.S. Marines helping guard Sunday's vote, the streams of men and women walking into the gritty polling places of this area south of Baghdad was a payoff more impressive than the toppling of Saddam's statue in the capital during the fall of his regime in April 2003 — less spectacular, but tougher to bring off.

"That was a work of triumphs — those are always easy. This is the hard work of democracy now," Lt. Col. Bob Durkin of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines said Sunday morning, from a rooftop where Marine marksmen stood watch over voting sites.

"Even my Marines are saying, 'Boy, we're doing a good thing,'" Lt. Col. Vinny Coglianese said in the largely Shiite town of Saddah, where scores of voters lined up outside.

The election for a National Assembly was Iraq's first free vote in more than 50 years, and voters showed up in defiance of insurgent threats to kill anyone who cast a ballot — a warning that ran especially dire in the collection of towns and villages south of Baghdad.

In the past year, the region has become known as the "triangle of death" for the frequent and deadly ambushes on the roads crossing through it from the capital to the south. Shites have been particularly at risk in the region, falling victim to shootings and checkpoint snipers set up by Sunni guerrillas.

Dozens of Iraqis were killed in attacks on the elections Sunday — mostly in Baghdad. Just to the southeast, a suicide bomber climbed on a bus full of voters and blew himself up, killing at least four people.

But the triangle of death had no deaths reported in attacks Sunday.



An Iraqi girl is searched by U.S. Marines on Sunday outside a polling center in the center of Faluja, Iraq.

Not that there wasn't violence. The night before the vote, green and red tracer fire and white muzzle blasts lit up parts of the sky in heavy shooting. And in the morning, mortar blasts woke the heavily Shiite town of Musayyib to election day.

In the long stretch before dawn, U.S. troops moved the last concrete bomb barriers and razor-wire streamers into place around polling sites and police stations. They scoured for explosives, sealed off roads and bridges, and ferried last-minute needs to election workers.

Daylight brought crowded streets, women's black headscarves billowing side to side as parents walked with their children to schoolhouse polling stations.

"We voted before but it was not democracy. You had to choose Saddam," said Abbas, whose finger — like those of all voters — was stained with blue indelible ink to prevent multiple votes.

The triangle of death is a religiously mixed area. It was once heavily Shiite, until Saddam years ago encouraged Sunnis loyalists to move there from the north and west.

While many towns here have large shares of Sunni Muslims, all the dozen or so voters questioned in the streets and polling places identified themselves as Shiite.

Cpl. Florian Gonzales of Norwalk, Conn., looked on from the sandbagged police station roof. The 22-year-old had a friend die and at least two others wounded in firefights and bombings on what is his second deployment here.

Gonzales' first deployment, in the opening of the U.S. invasion, saw 18 Marines of his battalion killed at Nasiriyah.

"Hopefully, what happens today reflects what we've been trying to do for the last seven months," Gonzales said. "I don't want anyone else to have to come back here and go through what we've been through."

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Saturday, at least 1,428 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,087 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The AP count includes four military civilians and is 17 higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Friday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 20; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,290 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 978 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military and the State Department:

■ A Defense Department civilian and a Navy sailor were killed Saturday when a rocket hit the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad.

■ A U.S. soldier was killed Saturday by an explosive in western Baghdad.

■ Two U.S. soldiers died Friday when their helicopter crashed in southwestern Baghdad.

The latest identifications reported by the Defense Department:

■ No identifications reported.

Annan: Iraq election 'a beginning, not an end'

The Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the world must not encourage voters in Iraq's elections, calling Sunday's balloting the first step toward democracy.

"They know they're voting for the future of their country. They're voting for the day when they're going to take their destiny in hand," Annan told reporters at an African Union

summit in the Nigerian capital, Abuja. "We must encourage them."

"It's the first step in a democratic process," Annan said of Sunday's vote. "It's a beginning, not an end," he added.

Annan appealed for an end to election-day violence in Iraq, where insurgent attacks killed at least 44 people on Sunday.

"I ask those who were inclined to challenge the elections not to use violence," he said. "The Iraqis who choose to vote must have the right to exercise their democratic rights."

The elections are seen as a crucial step toward Iraqi democracy after the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.



Annan

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35th Fighter Wing prepares for UCI

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

MISAWA AIR BASE, Japan — It's a checklist that would do a NASA shuttle launch team proud, going 15,000 items deep.

And that's just for the maintenance group.

The 35th Fighter Wing here is preparing for the paperwork-intensive Unit Compliance Inspection.

From Feb. 28 to March 4, about 15 inspectors from the Pacific Air Forces Inspector General's office will visit job sites to interview commanders, airmen and civilians about policies, procedures and requirements.

They'll observe DOD employees at work in 15 squadrons and the wing's staff agencies, examining the quality of unit training programs, fire safety and other practices.

The wing must demonstrate compliance with laws, Defense Department directives, Air Force Instruction and other requirements that govern day-to-day operations.

The inspectors "look at how we're in compliance with those and how our processes support those," said Maj. Mike Frey, 35th Fighter Wing inspector general. "This is our wing's report card for the next four years."

PACAF wings undergo a UCI about every 40 to 45 months, Frey said. It provides PACAF and the Air Force "with a credible, independent assessment of readiness and wing efficiency," said Master Sgt. Daniel Snelgrove, the wing's superintendent of maintenance group inspections, in a written

statement. "The UCI, along with a host of other inspections, provides a check-and-balance process within the Air Force."

Other UCI items to be scrutinized include Air Force and PACAF programs, such as fitness, voting assistance and sexual harassment education and prevention. The 35th Fighter Wing inspector general's office maintains a computer database of each squadron's checklist so units can update their progress online, reducing paperwork and enabling commanders to keep tabs on the process easily, Frey noted.

"It's a lot of work over the last year, especially with all the things on our plate," Frey said, to include exercises, deployments and tsunami relief efforts.

Preparation for the UCI began a year ago, and units are stepping it up. The post office recently started closing on Thursdays to prepare for the inspection; the civilian personnel flight doesn't take customer calls Thursday for the same reason. Every Friday, the 35th Fighter Wing's plans, programs and inspections office update the base newspaper how many days are left until UCI along with a preparation tip or reference to an important policy or instruction.

Units now are performing self-inspections, Frey said, adding, "We're taking extra time as it gets closer."

The wing's inspector general's office plans to practice a reception of the PACAF IG team next week and "take a cursory look" at how base units are coming along with UCI preparation.

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The cherry trees lining the street where the Nago Cherry Blossom Festival is held are just beginning to bloom. Despite overcast skies threatening rain, thousands visited the hillside in Nago where 20,000 cherry trees are planted.

PHOTOS BY
FRED ZIMMERMAN
Stars and Stripes

Nago Cherry Blossom Festival kicks off

BY FRED ZIMMERMAN
Stars and Stripes

NAGO, Okinawa — Mother Nature once again had the last laugh: Not even half of the 20,000 cherry trees here bloomed in time for the largest festival on the island celebrating their annual blossoming.

Clusters of pink still could be seen, though, throughout Nago Central Park's hillside during the 43rd Nago Cherry Blossom Festival this weekend. But the show of natural beauty was sporadic: Most of the 20,000 trees were just starting to grow buds, yet alone enter full bloom. The trees run from the city center up a hill to the ruins of Nago Castle.

The annual festival in Nago typically draws more than 250,000 visitors. A similar festival was held a week earlier at Mount Yaedake in nearby Motobu, where 7,000 trees line both sides of the road leading to the mountaintop.

The festival in Nago included bands, Okinawa dancers, taiko drummers and game and food booths.



Visitors walking up the more than 450 stairs at the Nago Cherry Blossom Festival are greeted by sparse blossoms as most of the cherry trees have yet to show off their bright pink flowers.

The Nago and Mount Yaedake festivals kick off the month-long cherry blossom season. The

blossoms of the Okinawa Hikan-sakura cherry trees are heartier than the trees on mainland Japan.

The Okinawa trees' display lasts about a month; the mainland cherry blossoms last roughly one week. Okinawa's blossoms also are a darker pink and smaller than their whitish-pink mainland counterparts.

The blossoms in both Okinawa locations should paint the scenery pink at least through mid-February.

■ To get to Mount Yaedake: Take Highway 58 north, or the Okinawa Toll Road to the last (Nago) exit, then get onto Highway 58. Drive through Nago, turn left onto Highway 84 and follow the signs to Mount Yaedake.

■ To get to Nago Central Park: Take the same route to reach Nago, but turn right at the sign to the city's business district. You'll drive for several minutes before eventually seeing the bright flowers on the hillside.

E-mail Fred Zimmerman at: zimmerman@pstrips.osd.mil

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IN THE WORLD

5 weeks after tsunami, death toll still rising

BY IRWAN FIRDAUS
The Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — More bodies were still being discovered in Aceh five weeks after the disaster and the government said it had buried nearly 5,000 more victims in the past week, upping the death toll across 11 countries to between 150,704 and 178,115. Additionally, the number of missing ranges from 26,901 to 142,132 — with most presumed dead.

The variation in the toll reflects differing figures being released by separate government agencies in both Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the hardest-hit countries in the Dec. 26 disaster.

Meanwhile, fresh fighting in Indonesia's Aceh province and a premature end to cease-fire talks between the government and rebels dampened hopes of peace in the tsunami-hit region, but aid workers said Sunday they weren't being targeted and were optimistic the massive relief effort would not be disrupted.

The clash in Aceh occurred Saturday when soldiers shot and killed a guerrilla commander and three of his fighters in a gunbattle in the east of the province, Indonesian military spokesman Lt. Col. Eddyana Sulistadine said. Independent confirmation was not immediately available.

But the United Nations said it didn't expect the fighting to affect relief work.

"We don't expect to be a target," said Joel Bouteau, head of the United Nations relief efforts in Aceh.



An Aceh woman washes dishes outside her tent in a refugee camp in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, on Sunday. Aceh's government said it buried nearly 5,000 more victims in the past week, upping the death toll across 11 countries to between 150,704 and 178,115.

Meanwhile, in other developments:

■ French construction giant Lafarge SA, the world's largest cement supplier, said it plans to invest "tens of millions of dollars" to rebuild a big cement factory in Aceh that was damaged by the tsunami. There is a lot of money coming in for the reconstruction, and naturally cement will be needed for that, Tom Ehrhart, the head of Lafarge Indonesia, said.

■ Austria announced it would send a

team of experts to Sri Lanka to help rebuild its rail system, which was badly damaged by the waves. Among the dead in Sri Lanka were about 800 people who were killed when the tsunami tore through their train as it traveled along the coastline.

■ Thailand is to establish a tsunami museum to chronicle the plight of survivors and changes to the environment in areas devastated by the waves. Photographs, video footage, satellite images and inter-

views with survivors have already been collected, the Thai News Agency said.

■ A meeting in Thailand of delegates from 74 nations approved a plan Saturday to set up a tsunami warning network for southern Asia. Delegates had originally planned for a centralized system, but failed to agree on where to base a hub that would collect seismic and oceanographic data, analyze it and issue alerts to coastal areas in danger. Experts say even a few minutes' warning could have saved many of the lives lost.

The Aceh peace talks were held near Helsinki, Finland, on Friday and Saturday. They ended a day earlier without a formal truce being reached, said former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, who convened the meeting.

There was no word on why they ended prematurely. Indonesian Communications Minister Sofyan Djalil described the talks as "quite hopeful." Ahtisaari said neither party had yet accepted an invitation to a second round of meetings.

Both the insurgents, who have been fighting for an independent homeland in Aceh since 1976, and government forces declared an informal cease-fire after the tsunami. But the promises appear to have been ignored. The military says it has killed more than 1,000 people since the disaster, raising concerns about the security of the relief operations in Aceh.

Aid groups said the early cutoff of the peace negotiations would not hamper their work.

Suspected terror bomb hits Spanish hotel

BY DANIEL WOOLLS
The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — A bomb exploded Sunday in a Mediterranean resort hotel in southeast Spain after a telephone warning from the Basque separatist group ETA, the Interior Ministry said. One person was injured in the attack.

The bomb was in a backpack and detonated in a courtyard of the Hotel Port Denia at about 3:15 p.m. Denia is a beach town in the Spanish province of Alicante and is popular with tourists.

The warning call was placed to

police in the Basque region. The caller ended the warning by saying, "Gora ETA," which is Basque for "Long live ETA," an Interior Ministry official in Madrid said on the condition of anonymity.

The hotel immediately evacuated about 160 people before the bomb exploded about 30 minutes later. A male guest suffered slight injuries from the blast, the official said.

Interior Minister Jose Antonio Alonso condemned the attack and vowed that Spain's security forces "will continue to use all the means at their disposal, with cur-

rent law as the only limit, until ETA disappears completely," the ministry said in a statement.

ETA is blamed for more than 800 deaths since the late 1960s in a campaign of bombings and shootings aimed at achieving an independent Basque homeland in land straddling northern Spain and southwest France.

The hotel bombing occurred two days before Spain's Parliament was scheduled to debate — and almost certainly reject — a proposal making the Basque region virtually independent.

On Jan. 18, a powerful car bomb exploded in the affluent

town of Getxo near the main Basque city, Bilbao. That blast also was preceded by a call from a person claiming to speak for ETA.

That explosion caused slight injuries to a policeman and dashed hopes that ETA might be close to calling a cease-fire. Two days earlier, ETA issued a statement appealing to the Spanish government to start peace talks with Batasuna, ETA's banned political wing.

The statement made no mention of ETA laying down its weapons, the government's stated condition for undertaking such talks.

5 killed by old mine

ARGHANDAB, Afghanistan — Five civilians died and at least nine others were injured Sunday when their pickup truck hit a mine apparently left over from Afghanistan's long wars, officials and witnesses reported.

The vehicle detonated the land mine after driving off the side of the road in a remote area near Arghandab in southern Kandahar province.

Local police chief Zamara Khan said the five men were killed and one of the people, about half of them children, were taken to hospital in Kandahar city for treatment.

However, a man called Alizai who witnessed the explosion said one child was among the five killed and that another nine people were hurt.

Israel to shift control of four towns to Palestinians

BY PETER ENAV
The Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel will transfer security control over several West Bank towns to the Palestinians in coming days, Israel's defense minister said Sunday, hours after meeting with a top Palestinian negotiator to work out the details of Israel's troop redeployment.

A senior Palestinian security official said control of the first four towns — Ramallah, Tulikarm, Qalqilya and Jericho — would be handed over Wednesday, the latest sign of rapid change on the ground after more than four years of fighting.

Israel informed Palestinian offi-

cials it was ready to withdraw from all West Bank towns "within a very short period of time" and return to positions it held before the outbreak of fighting in September 2000, said Hassan Abu Libdeh, a senior Palestinian official.

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, more than 100,000 demonstrators gathered Sunday to protest Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to evacuate all 21 Jewish settlements from Gaza and four from the West Bank, demanding it be put to a national referendum.

Israel TV estimated that an hour after the demonstration began, 130,000 people were gathered across from the parliament and government buildings.

The demonstrators' demand reflects a growing recognition by Jewish settlers and their allies that barring a last minute deal, Sharon has the political muscle to push the Gaza plan through. In all 8,500 settlers stand to be displaced in the operation, set for the summer.

Such a pullback is part of the long-stalled, U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan, which both sides now say they are ready to implement.

Abu Libdeh said the pullback would include removing some of the roadblocks now ringing Palestinian towns and severely disrupting daily life in the West Bank.

Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat, meanwhile, said

Feb. 8 is emerging as a target date for a summit between Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and Sharon, a crucial step toward ending hostilities and resuming peace talks.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will arrive in the region two days earlier for talks with both sides.

Abu Libdeh said the summit would be prepared in detail, and a decisive meeting of Abbas and Sharon aides would be held later this week.

Three die in shootout

KUWAIT CITY — Three suspected terrorists and a security officer were killed Sunday in a shootout in a neighborhood in Kuwait's capital where many foreigners live, state television reported Sunday.

Four police officers were injured in the clash and one suspect was arrested in the operation, according to state-owned Kuwait Television. A Bahraini man who lived in the building where the attack took place was also killed, according to the report, but he was not connected to the incident.

The report said the clash had ended but that police were still combing the residential neighborhood for suspects.

From The Associated Press

Economic forum ends with goals for globe

BY PAUL HAVEN

The Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland — More than 2,000 of the world's rich and powerful left this luxurious Swiss ski resort Sunday with a few more ideas on how to improve the world.

Whether any of the lofty goals set forward at the World Economic Forum for stamping out poverty, fighting disease and bringing peace to the Middle East and elsewhere will take root in the global trouble spots far from this idyllic Alpine village won't be known for some time.

But there was hope among many social activists here, including U2 frontman Bono, that the world leaders were doing more than just blowing smoke.

"I think we can be the generation that ends extreme poverty. I really do, and I think I will spend the rest of my life pledged to that commitment," Bono said, heaping praise on British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates and others he said were committed to "getting it right" in fighting poverty, particularly in Africa.

The Davos summit has been taking place for decades, mostly as a place for bil-

lionaires and millionaires to mingle. Businessmen pay \$12,000 each for the privilege of rubbing shoulders with each other political heavyweights like German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, former U.S. president Bill Clinton and others.

But the gathering has become more socially conscious in recent years, in part in response to anti-globalization protesters who have denounced it as elitist and disconnected.

Blair and French President Jacques Chirac challenged world leaders to finally address grinding poverty in Africa, where 300 million people lack safe drinking

water, 3,000 African children under the age of 5 die every day from malaria, and 6,000 die daily of AIDS.

American leaders, normally a strong presence at the summit, were notably absent this year amid a rise in anti-U.S. sentiment. The highest-ranking Bush administration official to attend was Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. The absence of a Republican heavy-hitter at the meeting, which comes just a week after President Bush's inauguration, frustrated some participants trying to get new insights into U.S. policy over the next four years.

S. Korea urges U.S. to engage the North

Nixon's China accord could provide a model

BY ALEXANDER G. HIGGINS

The Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland — A top South Korean official on Sunday urged the United States to engage diplomatically with North Korea to resolve a dispute over the North's nuclear weapons program, comparing such a policy to President Nixon's decision to recognize China in the 1970s.

"The time for diplomacy is now," Chung Dong-young, South Korean minister for Korean unification, told business and government leaders attending the World Economic Forum.

Chung spoke on the final day of the five-day meeting of 2,500 top business executives, politicians and social leaders in this Alpine resort town.

He called on the United States to engage in a diplomatic dialogue, saying a policy of containment against the North will fail.

He noted that the late President Nixon's 1972 trip to China helped to open Beijing to rest of the world, leading to "considerable improvement" in human rights in the country.

At the same time, Chung said, North Korea must decide it is time to act.

"Pyongyang must not miss this chance," Chung said. "Now it must join the international community as a responsible member" by relinquishing its weapons program.

The United States has struggled to re-start negotiations with North Korea in six-party talks along with South Korea, China, Japan and Russia, after the three prior rounds made no breakthroughs. The last round was held in June.

Chung said he hoped to invite the North's secretive leader Kim Jong Il to attend this year's meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization, if his country makes substantial progress on its weapons program.



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Audit: Nearly \$9B unaccounted for in Iraq

BY LARRY MARGASAK
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. occupation authority in Iraq was unable to keep track of nearly \$9 billion it transferred to government ministries, which lacked financial controls, security, communications and adequate staff, an inspector general has found.

The U.S. officials relied on Iraqi audit agencies to account for the funds, but those offices were not even functioning when the funds were transferred between October 2003 and June 2004, according to an audit by a special U.S. inspector general. The findings were released Sunday by Stuart Bowen Jr., special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction. Bowen issued several reports on the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the U.S. occupation government that ruled Iraq from June 2003 to June 2004.

The official who led the CPA, L. Paul Bremer III, submitted a blistering, written reply to the findings, saying the report had "many misconceptions and inaccuracies" and lacked professional judgment.

Bremer complained the report "assumes that western-style budgeting and account-

"We believe the CPA management of Iraq's national budget process and oversight of Iraqi funds was burdened by severe inefficiencies and poor management."

Stuart Bowen Jr.

Special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction

ing procedures could be immediately and fully implemented in the midst of a war."

The inspector general said the occupying agency disbursed \$8.8 billion to Iraqi ministries "without assurance the monies were properly accounted for."

U.S. officials, the report said, "did not establish or implement sufficient managerial, financial and contractual controls." There was no way to verify that the money was used for its intended purposes of financing humanitarian needs, economic reconstruction, repair of facilities, disarmament and civil administration.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said Sunday the authority was hamstringing by "extraordinary conditions" under which it worked throughout its mission.

"We simply disagreed with the audit's con-

clusion that the CPA provided less than adequate controls," Whitman said.

Turning over the money "was in keeping with the CPA's responsibility to transfer these funds and administrative responsibilities to the Iraqi ministries as an essential part of restoring Iraqi governance."

The inspector general cited an International Monetary Fund assessment in October 2003 on the poor state of Iraqi government offices. The assessment found ministries suffered from staff shortages, poor security, disruptions in communications, damage and looting of government buildings, and lack of financial policies.

Some of the transferred funds may have paid "ghost" employees, the inspector found.

CPA staff learned that 8,206 guards

were on the payroll at one ministry, but only 602 could be accounted for, the report said. At another ministry, U.S. officials found 1,417 guards on the payroll but could only confirm 642.

When staff members of the U.S. occupation government recommended that payrolls be verified before salary payments, CPA financial officials "stated the CPA would rather overpay salaries than risk not paying employees and inciting violence," the inspector general said.

Bremer attacked many of the specific findings. Among his rebuttal points:

■ The report was suggesting the CPA "should have placed hundreds of CPA auditors" in Iraqi ministries, contrary to United States and United Nations policy of giving Iraqi ministers responsibility for their budgets.

■ The CPA established a program review board, an independent judiciary and inspector generals in each agency to fight corruption.

The inspector general's report rejected Bremer's criticism. It concluded that despite the war, "We believe the CPA management of Iraq's national budget process and oversight of Iraqi funds was burdened by severe inefficiencies and poor management."

Woman dies in prison

LAS VEGAS — The only woman on Nevada's death row, imprisoned for running down a holiday crowd on a sidewalk nearly 25 years ago, died Saturday at age 75, authorities said.

Priscilla Ford, who had appealed her death sentence several times, was suffering from emphysema, said Fritz Schlottman, spokesman for the Nevada Department of Corrections.

Ford was convicted of killing six people and injured 23 others when she drove down a crowded Reno sidewalk on Thanksgiving Day in 1980.

Selling KKK gear

HOWELL, Mich. — Ku Klux Klan robes sold for up to \$1,425 and a KKK knife drew a \$400 bid Saturday during an auction of paraphernalia from the racist group that critics have blasted as insensitive.

Auctioneer Gary Gray said a steady stream of people visited the auction house in Howell in the hours leading up to the sale, where participants could bid on KKK robes and capes, as well as buttons, brooches, swords, patches and movies.

Four killed in crash

GENESEIO, N.Y. — A charter bus collided with a tractor-trailer in western New York on Saturday, killing the bus in half and killing four people.

The bus was carrying members of a Canadian women's youth hockey team when it rear-ended the truck parked on the shoulder of Interstate 19, about 27 miles south of Rochester.

The truck driver and three passengers were killed, said Mark O'Donnell, a spokesman for New York State Police.

From The Associated Press

Storm puts lights out for 300,000 in Georgia

Latest winter debacle again leaves hundreds stranded in airports

BY ELIOTT C. MCLAUGHLIN
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — More than 300,000 customers had no electricity Sunday in Georgia as crews worked to repair power lines snapped by an ice storm, and hundreds of people stranded by canceled airline flights spent the night sleeping at the city's airport.

Two traffic deaths in Georgia and one in South Carolina were blamed on the storm that spread sleet and freezing rain across parts of the Southeast on Saturday.

The weather was taking a sharp turn on Sunday, with highs in the 40s forecast for northern Georgia and in the 60s in the southern part of the state, the National Weather Service said.

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport got ready to open a third runway Sunday, spokeswoman Lani Thomas said. Only two — and at one point only one — of its four runways were available Saturday as crews labored to scrape off ice.

Still, fewer than 100 departures were scheduled out of one of the world's busiest airports Sunday morning, she said. About 300 travelers spent the night at the airport Saturday night.

"I'm sure the airlines are going to do everything within their power to rebuild their schedules," Thomas said.



A firefighter walks past the destruction left after a motor home collided with an 18-wheeler on Interstate 77 Saturday in Fort Mill, S.C. The Timbers family of Ontario, Canada, was on their way to Walt Disney World when they hit a patch of ice and lost control.

Teen abortions bill high on GOP's priority list

BY DAVID CRYER
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The abortion bill most likely to become federal law this year would affect a relatively small number of pregnant teens, yet its impact on them could be dramatic — sharply reducing the options for girls in many states who dread telling their parents of their plight.

Supporters and opponents each offer vivid worst-case scenarios in debating the bill, which was introduced last week in the Senate Republican's priority list.

It would outlaw transporting a minor across state lines to obtain an abortion in order to evade parental consent or notification laws in the girl's home state.

The bill's advocates evoke the

image of a girl being impregnated by an abusive older man who then drives them to an out-of-state abortion clinic so the girl's parents and the authorities won't find out about a relationship that might have been illegal because of age differences.

Opponents of the bill say it would criminalize the well-meaning acts of an aunt, older sister or other confidante who assists a girl terrified of being beaten or evicted from home if her parents learned of the pregnancy.

"You're talking about girls who really need support — let them have whatever support they have," said Shawn Towsey of the National Network of Abortion Funds. "This bill is going to have a chilling effect on people who are just there to help."

Titled the Child Custody Protection Act, and carrying a sentence of up to one year in prison, the bill has bounced around Congress for years, winning House approval three times but never reaching a vote on the Senate floor. Only now — after making the Senate GOP's Top 10 priority list — do supporters and foes believe its passage is probable.

"We're proceeding as if it's going to pass," said Lorraine Kenny of the American Civil Liberties Union's Reproductive Freedom Project. ACLU lawyers already are studying possible challenges on grounds that the bill violates the right to travel from state to state and does not make an exception for cases when a girl's health is jeopardized.

Activists on both sides expect support for the bill from majority Republicans, perhaps joined by some Democrats. Some doubt Democratic leaders will wage an all-out fight against it.

"Politically, it would be very high risk for the Senate Democrats to filibuster this bill," said Douglas Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee.

"Polls show that about 80 percent of Americans support the concept of parental notification."

Opponents agree that young women are better off telling parents about a pregnancy, and say most do so voluntarily. But abortion-rights activists argue that politicians should not impose mandates that might backfire in cases where family communication already has broken down.

Jackson trial shaping up to be a thriller

BY LINDA DEUTSCH
The Associated Press

SANTA MARIA, Calif. — The child molestation case against Michael Jackson is finally ready for a trial that promises to be like no other.

Jury selection was to begin Monday, with Jackson expected to appear, in a case that has become a symbol of the American obsession with celebrity. Early Sunday, Jackson issued a court-approved video statement on his Web site, calling recent media leaks in the case "disgusting and false."

"Please keep an open mind and let me have my day in court," Jackson said, looking directly into the camera. "I deserve a fair trial like every other American citizen. I will be acquitted and vindicated when the truth is told."

The uphill task of finding jurors who haven't prejudged the case is a mere prelude to a courtroom contest that will include

Entertainer scolds media on Web site

testimony from the boy who accuses the pop icon of molesting him.

More than 1,000 news representatives have applied for credentials, including reporters from Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, Switzerland, Germany, Canada and Mexico.

On the defense side of court sits a glittering superstar who appears in makeup and theatrical outfits and has millions of fans worldwide who don't believe he could be a pedophile. Jackson, 46, is charged with molesting the cancer patient — then age 13, now 15 — after playing him with alcohol.

On the prosecution side is Jackson's long-time nemesis, a balding, mustachioed Santa Barbara County district attorney. For more than a decade Tom Sneddon has pursued Jackson and what happens at his Neverland

Ranch. Jackson has derided him in song as a "cold man" with a vendetta and likened the case to persecution.

Sneddon, 61, recently asked the judge to stop attacks on his motives. If the defense continues to call the case a crude attempt to "take down a major celebrity," the prosecution wrote, Sneddon will reveal "everything he knows about this defendant."

Prosecutors have complained that defense lawyer Thomas Mesereau Jr. uses courtroom invective not only to hammer his opponents but also to brand the child witnesses — the accuser and his brother — as liars manipulated by their greedy mother. Mesereau is a tall, imposing man with a mane of white hair, known for winning seemingly hopeless death penalty cases in the South.

The referee is Superior Court Judge Rod-

ney Melville, 63, a veteran of the bench who has refused to tolerate tardiness or even, in one case, a bathroom break for the defendant. At the final pretrial hearing Friday, Melville made it clear that a gag order stands, and he won't abide lawyers attacking each other. "I expect and know that you will, all on both sides, carry the burden of showing the world what a fine system we have," Melville said.

From the start Melville has tried to clamp an extraordinary lid of secrecy on information. As jury selection neared, competition for a scoop undermined Melville's efforts. On the 1,900-page transcript of the case prosecutors presented to the grand jury that indicted Jackson was leaked last month to the *smokinggun.com* and ABC News.

Among other things, the transcript included the accuser's testimony that Jackson closed his eyes tightly while molesting him on a bed, and that the pop star ignored the child's warnings that he shouldn't drink alcohol because of his medical condition.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Japanese yen (Jan. 31)	101.00
South Korean won (Jan. 29)	1,001.00
Euro costs (Jan. 31)	\$1.341
Dollar buys (Jan. 31)	65.7688
British pound (Jan. 31)	\$1.94

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.8888
Canada (Dollar)	1.2402
Denmark (Krone)	5.6925
Egypt (Pound)	5.8716
Euro	\$1.3069/1671
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7995
Hungary (Forint)	163.04
Japan (Yen)	109.59
Israel (Shekel)	4.3995
Japan (Yen)	109.38
Kuwait (Dinar)	6.2919
Norway (Krone)	6.3151
Philippines (Peso)	55.06
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7502
Singapore (Dollar)	1.6330
South Korea (Won)	1,097.58
Switzerland (Franc)	1.1855
Thailand (Baht)	38.46
Turkey (New Lira)	1.4045

Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.

PRECIOUS METALS

New York Merc ore	
Gold	\$425.80
Silver	\$6.785

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	4.75
Federal funds market rate	2.475
3-month bill	2.46
30-year bond	4.61

Sources: The Associated Press, Bank of America

Sundance festival honors its top picks

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The family drama "Forty Shades of Blue," centering on a modern Oedipal triangle involving a music producer, a Russian wife half his age and his son, won top dramatic honors at the Sundance Film Festival.

"Why We Fight," examining

the chronically militant stance of the United States over the past half-century, took Sundance's grand jury prize for documentaries.

Awards were presented Saturday, with top winners screening one last time on Sunday as the 11-day independent-film showcase ended in Park City, Utah.

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

Tax resources

Knight Ridder News Service

That dreaded annual rate has rolled around again: tax time.

It's never too early to file your individual taxes. But if you need to get up to speed on your tax preparation, you might look at one of the following Web sites that feature useful tax insights and information.

■ www.bankrate.com. Offers tax tips, from basics to tax-saving advice.

■ www.hrblock.com. Contains wide range of tax tips and calculators.

■ www.irs.gov. Provides insights, advice and resources for individual tax filers.

■ www.smartmoney.com/tax. Features tax basics, worksheets and feature articles.

■ www.taxhawk.com. Select "tax tips" to access list of top 10 tax tips and more.



Ira Sachs, who directed and co-wrote the film "Forty Shades of Blue," receives the dramatic grand jury award Saturday for the film about a music producer, a Russian wife half his age and his son at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

AP

Directed and co-written by Ira Sachs, "Forty Shades of Blue" stars Rip Torn as the aging husband, Dina Korzun as his Russian bride and Darren Burrows as the estranged son whose visit hurts their lives into turmoil.

"Why We Fight" was directed by Eugene Jarecki, brother of Andrew Jarecki, whose "Capturing the Friedmans" won the Sundance documentary prize in 2003.

The audience award for dramatic films, chosen in voting by Sundance film-goers, went to "Hustle & Flow," the tale of a two-bit pimp and drug-dealer (Terrence Howard) who enlists an odd assortment of allies in a bid to break into the hip-hop music scene. Written and directed by Craig Brewer, "Hustle & Flow" was produced by John Singleton.

Sundance movie-goers chose directors Henry Alex Rubin and

Dana Adam Shapiro's "Murderball," a portrait of the competitive spirit of wheelchair-bound athletes, as the audience-awardee winner for documentaries.

Filmmaker Zeze Gamba's "The Hero," set in the aftermath of decades of civil war in Angola, earned the grand jury prize among world-cinema dramatic contenders.

"Shape of the Moon," Dutch director Leonard Retel Helmrich's portrait of a Christian family in Muslim-dominated Indonesia, took top honors in the world-cinema documentary category.

Special jury prizes for acting were given to Amy Adams, who plays a childlike Southern waitress captivated by her worldly new sister-in-law from up north in "Junebug," and to Lou Pucci as a teenager whose oral fixation for his thumb causes a ruckus among his family in "Thumbstruck."



Easy Valentine's Day gift-giving!

From now until February 14, 2005, Moon River Pearls, an online pearl jewelry store, is honoring all U.S. military 300 AF AA-quality, solid nautilus classic and modern pearl jewelry, plus FREE pearl earrings with every necklace order. This Valentine's Day, treat your sweetheart (ladies, treat yourselves!) to gorgeous pearl jewelry!



Click on the yellow ribbon at

www.moonriverpearls.com for details.



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FACES

Palmer weds at 75, feels youthful again

At 75, Arnold Palmer feels like a kid again after saying, "I do."

Palmer married Kathleen Gawthorp Wednesday in an intimate beach-side ceremony on Oahu, Hawaii's North Shore. "I feel like a 25-year-old," he said Thursday.

The ceremony took place in a beach cottage near the Arnold Palmer Course at the Turtle Bay Resort, where the four-time Masters champion was to play at this weekend's Champions Tour event.

"She's a great lady. I've known her for a long time. We've been engaged for some time and dated before that," Palmer said. "She's just very special."

The wedding ceremony, held as the sun set over the Pacific Ocean, was private and small. "The minister, the bride and the groom. That was it," Palmer said.

This is Palmer's second marriage. His wife of 45 years, Winnie, died in 1999.

Berlin film festival presenters named

German actress **Franke Potente**, Chinese actress **Bai Ling** and French fashion designer **Nino Cerruti** will be among those choosing the winner of the Golden Bear top prize at the Berlin International Film Festival next month.

Their names were announced Thursday by organizers of the event, which will be held Feb. 10-20. **Roland Emmerich**, director of "Independence Day" and "The Day After Tomorrow," will head the jury.

Among the 21 contenders for the top prize are **Wes Anderson's** "The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou," **Kinsey**, about American sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, and "Paradise Now," a Dutch-German French co-production that follows 28 hours in the lives of two Palestinian suicide bombers.

Foot infection nearly knocked out Swank

While training for the boxing drama "Million Dollar Baby," Hilary Swank was nearly TKO'd — by a foot infection.

Swank, nominated for an Oscar as best actress for her performance in the Clint Eastwood-directed film, says a blister on her foot nearly led to her downfall.

After popping the blister, Swank continued her rigorous workouts. But soon she was in intense pain and knew something was wrong. "I couldn't believe the pain," the 30-year-old actress said.

"It was unbelievable and I looked down, there were streaks going to my foot."

"So, I went to the doctor's that second and he looked at me and he said, 'This is really serious. And if you would have waited two more hours, you would have been in the hospital for three weeks — and if it gets to your heart, that's it.'"

Swank says she was diagnosed with a bacterial infection but never told Eastwood, also her co-star in the movie, because it wouldn't have been in character. Instead, she took several days of medication and then to the ring.

"I didn't tell Clint," she says. "The producers don't know because in the end, that's what happens to boxers: They get blisters, they get infected. They have injuries, and they keep pushing through it."

Swank won an Oscar in 2000 for her performance in "Boys Don't Cry."

Tsunami-relief benefit raises \$50,000

A benefit concert by country, gospel and contemporary Christian artists to help victims of the tsunami in South Asia raised more than \$50,000.

Christian pop star **Michael W. Smith** and country singer **Kathy Mattea** hosted Wednesday's event — "An Evening for Restoration: Music City Comes Together for Tsunami Relief" — at Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn.

Performers included **Steven Curtis Chapman**, **Marty Roe of Diamond Rio**, **CoCo Minnie**, **Billy Skaggs** & **Kentucky Thunder**, **Steve Cropper**, the **Oak Ridge Boys**, **Kirk Whalum**, **toByMac**, **Crystal Gayle**, **MercyMe**, **Lee Greenwood**, **The Whites**, **Raul Malo**, **The Crabb Family**, **Dr. Bobby Jones**, **Michael Martin Murphey**, the **Nashville Chamber Orchestra** and several Grand Ole Opry stars.

Proceeds went to the international relief agency World Vision, which is working in the stricken southern Asian region, concert organizers said Thursday.

Islamic architect designer honored

Prince **Karim Aga Khan IV** received the fifth **Vincent Scully Prize** in recognition of his decades of work to re-energize design in the Islamic world and to preserve historic sites.



Aga Khan

The Vincent Scully Prize, named for an architect professor at Yale University, was established in 1999 to recognize exemplary practice scholarship or criticism in architecture, historic preservation and urban design.

World Bank President **James Wolfensohn** was among those in the audience Tuesday night paying tribute to the Aga Khan at a black-tie gala.

The Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam, a spiritual leader of 20 million Islamic Muslims in Asia and Africa, who traces his lineage directly from the Prophet Muhammad. The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has educated a generation of architects, teachers, planners and researchers, most from the Islamic

world, since 1979.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Paul Mesner holds a puppet in his studio in Kansas City, Mo. Mesner, 48, produces puppet shows in Kansas City and across the country. He also is new president of **Puppeteers of America**, an organization that promotes puppetry in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

POUPPET LOVE

Demand for puppeteers surges as interest grows

BY MARIA SUDEKUM FISHER

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. Paul Mesner romps around his studio in shorts and tennis shoes, pointing out the special mouth hinges and weighted eyeballs that go into making the perfect puppet. His specialty is traditional rod puppets, but he also works with hand puppets and marionettes.

Mesner is founder of **Paul Mesner Puppets** and is the new president of **Puppeteers of America**, an organization that promotes puppetry in the United States, Mexico and Canada. He is taking the helm of the 2,000 or so member organization at a time when puppets rule.

It's not just Bert and Ernie or Miss Piggy and Kermit anymore.

Puppets have become major players on Broadway, starring in such productions as "Avenue Q," "The Lion King" and "Little Shop of Horrors," and are featured in such movies as "Team America: World Police."

College students also have taken note. The University of Hawaii and West Virginia University offer courses in puppetry, and students at the University of Connecticut-Storrs can get bachelor's and master's degrees in puppet theater.

"The whole puppetry thing is incredibly vital right now," Mesner says. "And I can think of four or five universities that are turning out five to six graduate students a year and 10 to 20 undergraduates a year. Then there's Disney, which is training about 500 people to be puppeteers at their theme parks."

John Bell, who teaches a puppetry workshop at Emerson College in Boston and has been a POA member since the 1980s, said Mesner would be good at bridging the gap between the older puppeteers and the younger ones.

"He's part of that generation that came up after Jim Henson and among the people who saw the possibilities with puppets and were part of this real flourishing of puppet theaters in combination with the avant-garde and the political art, and with the new possibilities of television and film," Bell said.

Bell, who also runs **Great Small Works**, a puppet theater in New York, said it's an important time for puppetry because people no longer only associate it with children's theater.

"Now, when people find out you work with puppets, they don't say, 'Do you know the Muppets?' They say, 'Oh, there's some avant-garde

puppet show in a water tank in New York.' It's just part of the consciousness of people now."

While puppetry has been on the move lately, it has been a constant in Mesner's life. Now 48, he made his first puppet as a child by adding strings to the back of his teddy bear. He went on to apprentice with a puppeteer in Nebraska during junior high and high school. And he learned early that puppetry would not be an easy career choice.

"You have to be tenacious to make it in the theater," Mesner says.

... But what matters the most is when kids come up and tell me they loved my show."

Mesner produces puppet shows throughout the United States. His past productions include a two-hour opera collaboration of "The Mikado," "Strega Nona" and a "Cinderella," in which the heroine heads off to the ball on a Vespa. Shows are often sold out but some of his more ambitious productions, such as last spring's opera collaboration of "The Mikado," didn't draw as many people as Mesner had hoped.

"We generally count on 2,000 people seeing a show. But every time I'm setting the bar a little higher," Mesner said. "We got 4,000 to 'The Mikado,' but we wanted 5,000."

City Star, credits Mesner with adding to the local theater scene.

"For Kansas City, it's unusual because most children's theater has a tendency to be extremely earnest," Trussell said. "They shy away from anything that could conceivably be misinterpreted. But Paul never worried about that. ... He always had this quirky sense of humor that made his shows entertaining."

Mesner says he never speaks down to children. "So much of what kids get to watch has either been dumbed down or grossed down," he says. "I don't do that. I try to write everything for all ages."

As new president of POA, Mesner plans to reach out to people interested in moving into puppetry as a career. "Puppeteers of America needs to make itself a little more relevant, especially to the young people entering the field," he says.

He would tell students entering puppetry to compare their own community to Kansas City, which has about 1.5 million residents in the metro area, supports at least four puppet theaters, he says.

I would tell young puppeteers to make a five to 10-year commitment to a city," Mesner says. "It's just an underserved market, and think of all those unemployed actors in those cities."

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Show troops real support

The stir created by the University of Oregon's removal of a troop support display this month from a university website is a curious reflection of how Americans define a "show of support." Concern over the removal is unfounded and, ironically, overshadows the quality of life for returning troops, for whom the stickers are intended. Our support is woefully conditional. When troops come back safe and sound, we're there for them, providing hugs and handshakes. Yet we walk right past the less fortunate getting off the same plane. What we need is time, attention, and someone to stay on task with them.

The personal-responsibility rule suggests troops and their families must deplete their personal resources in the effort to secure assistance. This is ludicrous. We quietly nod or say nothing as budget cuts are proposed to veterans programs and assistance programs. We deliberately avoid the veterans' new reality. We shun them into areas of life designed for the less entitled. We reduce their images by labeling them "disadvantaged" and think this releases us from our responsibility to care for them as completely as they deserve.

Unlike the derelict who never contributed to society's benefit but benefits from society, troops and their families have earned our support to include basic living allowances, all levels of health care, financial assistance, education and employment that better their lives differing talents and skills. This is what they deserve.

Anything less is just a sticker on a car.

Diana Hartman

Stuttgart, Germany

ACLU unfairly accused

I am writing in response to the Dec. 6 letter "Freedom from regulation is key," in which I feel the American Civil Liberties Union was unfairly accused of needing to study the Constitution. On its Web site, www.aclu.org, the ACLU publishes its intent, purpose and agenda, including: "The We work daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States. Our job is to conserve America's original civil values — the Constitution and the Bill of Rights."

On its page addressing religious liberty, the ACLU says: "The free exercise clause of the First Amendment guarantees the right to practice one's religion free of government interference. The establishment clause requires the separation of church and state. Combined, they ensure religious liberty. Yet assaults on the freedom to believe continue, both in Washington and in state legislatures around the country."

Sounds to me that the ACLU is very well-versed in the Constitution and has set out to ensure its safety, which means both parts of the First Amendment, not just the

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorials and columns that are published in the newspaper, and values letters on subjects of importance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or base and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

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E-mail: mazzarella@patriots/strips.com

ed the coveted Combat Infantryman Badge posthumously.
The CB/Expert Infantryman Badge and Combat Field Medical Badge/Expert Field Medical Badge were made in 1943 to honor those soldiers who did the "majority" of the fighting and made the "major" sacrifices. Those in other military occupational specialties are honored for their contribution to the war with combat patches and six-month combat service stripes.

We are all on one team, fighting tyranny. But I hate to burst your bubble — the infantry is the backbone of the Army. The majority of MPs I have seen do guard duty and some combat service stripes. We are all on one team, fighting tyranny. But I hate to burst your bubble — the infantry is the backbone of the Army. The majority of MPs I have seen do guard duty and some combat service stripes. We are all on one team, fighting tyranny. But I hate to burst your bubble — the infantry is the backbone of the Army. The majority of MPs I have seen do guard duty and some combat service stripes.

Spec. Eric D. Kessler

Baghdad

All in combat deserve badge

Why isn't every soldier in the war getting combat badges? Some soldiers are up in arms about a Combat Infantryman's Badge awarded without the 11B military occupational specialty. This is ridiculous. Are not all soldiers infantry first? Predeployment training involves weeks of 11B tactics. Then this training is used during a tour of duty. Not to mention, it only takes two weeks in the National Guard to earn the 11B designation.

This is a different war, which means different rules. There are no front lines. The suicide bombing in the Mosul church hall exemplifies this. The laundry is among us, everyone is on the front line.

Serving in Iraq as a 91W (medic), I have three other MOSs, including 11B. With missions outside the wire, riding in convoys and the inconstant nature of our operating base, should I not receive a combat badge? I believe the soldier makes the medal, the medal does not make the soldier. Still, military awards are great for morale, unit cohesion and distinguishing one's work and sacrifice.

I want my silly little badge. I asked to go to combat. I will probably be here for more than a year. There is nothing wrong in feeling proud of our sacrifice and wanting to show it. We have earned it.

Sgt. Victor A. Ioffredo

Northern Iraq

Rich not doing share in Iraq

All the hullabaloo over the CBS report on President Bush's National Guard records would have happened if both Bushes had told the truth. As we all know, most of the rich and shameless never go to war unless they want to. Just look at our Congress — how many have any kin in the war on terrorism? Also look at the poor souls who are out there now, and the families that don't have enough funds to live their lives because they lost their loved ones. And that's what it is all about.

Alexander Fire

Camp Darby, Italy

Doonesbury



OPINION

Generous to a fault: Hype-free aid preferred

Sandra Bullock wants us to know she gave \$1 million to the Red Cross for tsunami disaster relief, which is nice of her. Indeed, when I Google "Sandra Bullock," 64,300 results appear.

Karen Heller



and other organizations aiding the relief effort."

As if the pictures, stories and statistics weren't enough.

As I write this, Jay Leno and Harley-Davidson are auctioning off a star-autographed Road King for disaster relief — it says so on their Web sites — which seems inappropriate in so many ways.

Kobe Bryant was one of seven NBA players who pledged \$1,000 for every point scored one recent week, though critics thought it might be an attempt at career rehab.

Each day brings fresh pronouncements from actors, musicians and Hollywood newspaper scribes of all the good work they're

doing in the name of the catastrophe.

Once again, we are venturing into the murky, though increasingly traveled, waters of In Style-magazine philanthropy. If someone better known is doing it, using a hair product or donating to a just cause, then mere mortals might do the same.

Some of us were raised with the belief that giving was a responsibility attended by humility, not a press release. To call attention to ourselves, even when we do noble deeds, is not beneficence but pride. Making ourselves more important than the cause is hubris. Yet, there's a prevailing me-tooism, with everyone racing to raise funds, and publicity, when only the former is needed.

We are inundated with appeals from schools, religious institutions and work-places to give as a group, upping the ante of how much must be delivered and then promoted, when many people were raised to believe that charity begins at home and that it's the individual who makes a difference, not a cheerleading effort.

Recent events have brought out the worst in opportunists, as easily as they bring out the best in the magnanimous. Publicists still opportunistic shrinks promoting their latest tsunami insights and self-help books to Asia, because every story needs to be recognized, when many people were raised to believe that charity begins at home and that it's the individual who makes a difference, not a cheerleading effort.



daniel.clowry.com

mote on television, in tabs and the glossies.

Look whatever the motivation, in the end good things are happening: a fund-raising record in individual and government donations, appropriate for one of the largest natural disasters in modern memory.

Traditionally, most charitable giving is too insular and self-reflective, with the largest gifts going to religious institutions (40 percent) or schools (32 percent), invari-

ably the donor's own. Until now, a paltry 2.2 percent has gone annually to international organizations, according to the American Association of Fundraising Counsel.

All I ask is that we operate with the modesty and grace charity requires. The gift is in the giving. The stories should be entirely devoted to those who matter, the recipients, the witnesses, the survivors or worse than we'll ever know.

Karen Heller is a Philadelphia Inquirer columnist.

Parties should unite to increase aid to war widows

If there is any common ground for agreement left between the warring political parties in Congress it should be in protecting the welfare of the loved ones of American soldiers who die in combat. At the moment, the nation's gratitude for those who have given their lives is a paltry \$12,420 — in many cases hardly enough to pay for funeral expenses.

Dan Thomasson



A proposal would increase that 1908-established gratuity to \$100,000, hardly an excessive amount when one considers what this government has paid survivors of victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack. That compensation averages well over \$1 million for civilian families, with relatives of policemen and firemen killed in the tragedy receiving more than twice that. The 9/11 victim compensation fund was established to protect the commercial airline industry from suits arising from the attack. It was not a great idea, given the precedent it sets.

Since it was established during President Theodore Roosevelt's administration in 1908 as a bonus for Civil War veterans, the gratuity, originally a few hundred dollars, has been increased several times — but not by much. It went to \$1,800 to \$3,000 (depending on rank) in 1956. During the Gulf War it was raised to \$6,900 with half of that taxable. In 2003, the amount was increased to \$12,000 and it was made tax free and tied to military pay raises. On Jan. 1, the 3.5 percent pay increase for all military personnel boosted it by \$420.

Currently, the Army provides both an opportunity for its troops to buy at a low rate a \$250,000 term life insurance policy and a death benefit of \$6,900. Plus there is a limit-

ed monthly stipend for wives.

There have been complaints that paperwork has made the insurance payments slow and some wives and children have been financially as well as emotionally devastated. Another plan circulating in Congress would have the Army pay the premium on the insurance policy. Some in the military have reduced the amount of the policy as a way of saving money or, in some cases, refused it altogether.

The proposal also would increase the insurance to \$300,000 and the estimates are that the cost of raising both the death gratuity and the insurance ceiling would cost about \$420 million in the first year.

While that may seem substantial, it is little enough to pay to assure those willing to sacrifice their lives that their survivors have extended security.

Few issues have more emotional appeal and practical application. If the nation is going to continue to rely on an all-volunteer military supplemented by reserve and National Guard units, then few other proposals

could do as much to keep recruitments high as convincing potential soldiers in a time of war that their loved ones will be taken care of should anything happen to them.

Aside from the practical aspect, it is simply the right thing, the moral thing to do. Past generations have willingly sacrificed their lives in the national interest without the kind of protections they deserved. Few have made an issue of it. The time has come to provide the guardians of our welfare and freedom with more than just a posthumous medal for bravery. In fact, the insurance policy should be extended to those who are permanently maimed in combat. As a former secretary of Veterans Affairs noted recently, those who care for soldiers who have lost a limb or face long-term disability frequently have more serious emotional and financial drains than the families of those who have died. But extending the insurance to cover injuries probably is some time off.

There are also several private foundations established to provide compensation for the families of those who die in service. The In-

terrepid Fund, supported by private donations, distributes several thousand dollars for children and wives and husbands of military dead.

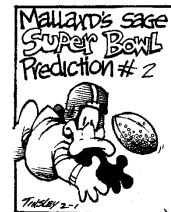
But the government should bear most of the burden.

Republicans pushing the increase clearly believe it will help offset Democratic charges that the Bush administration has been negligent in its treatment of servicemen and women, failing to provide many of them, particularly reservists and Guardsmen, with adequate armor and other equipment. Whatever the reasons behind this push, it is an opportunity for both parties to put aside some of the animosity already so obvious in the first days of the new Congress and do something for the most deserving among us. Chances seem fairly good that few lawmakers will want to vote against it, especially those who have been so critical of Iraq and current Pentagon policies.

Dan Thomasson is former editor of Scripps Howard News Service.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Twin record set

NY FREDONIA — The 157-student freshman class at Fredonia High School includes seven sets of twins — enough to earn the district a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Guinness has sent the district a certificate, which will be displayed in the high school. Only three of the sets attending the Chautauqua County school, about 50 miles west of Buffalo, were born locally.

Naughty festival name

MN GILBERT — Promoting this town's proud history is one thing. Naming the town's festival Gilbert Whorehouse Days is another thing entirely.

A group of angry citizens showed up at a City Council meeting to protest the event. The festival's name refers to a time when Gilbert, a remote town of about 2,000 people, was known for its bars, gambling and "working girls" during the U.S. government ban on drinking in the 1920s and 1930s.

"The damage has been done," resident Fran Mann said. "This is not a family-oriented activity."

The event doesn't include any of the activities that gave the festival its name, but City Council members still don't approve.

Organizers say the festival — and its name — are meant to bring back a part of history. The festival is planned for two days in July and includes a car show, antique fair and bank robbery re-enactment.

Black-and-white apology

FL JACKSONVILLE — When five dozen roses didn't work, an estranged husband took to a full-page newspaper ad to ask his wife for forgiveness.

"Please believe the words in my letter, they are true and from my heart," read the ad in The Florida Times-Union. "I can only hope you will give me the chance to prove my unending love for you. Life without you is empty and meaningless."

Larry, who declined to give his last name, sent the \$17,000 apology to Marianne, his wife of 17 years.

"It was a culmination of things," he told the newspaper. "But I am desperately trying to save our marriage."

A relative told him that Marianne saw the advertisement.

"She said my wife read the ad and started crying. But so far I've had no response from her," Larry said.

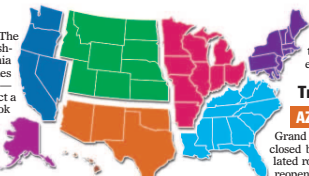
Animal electrocution

TX BROWNSVILLE — A water pump at the Gladys Porter Zoo may have produced an electric current that killed three antelopes, zoo officials said.

According to autopsies, the female West African bushbucks died the weekend of Jan. 8 of acute myocardial necrosis complications of the heart.

"We can't say for sure that this happened, but we have ruled out as many things as possible," zoo spokeswoman Cynthia Garza-Galvan said in The Brownsville Herald.

"The results are consistent with electrical shock."



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

License investigation

CO DENVER — Officials will examine Colorado's 124,000 commercial driver's licenses following allegations that state workers sold some to unqualified drivers and illegal immigrants, state revenue officials said. The commercial licenses are required to drive tractor-trailers and other large vehicles. Two driver's license examiners and a third person face charges.

Airport tops own record

NV LAS VEGAS — McCarran International Airport hosted more than 41.4 million travelers last year, besting its previous record of 36.9 million set in 2000. Southwest Airlines was the busiest carrier at McCarran, serving just over 13 million passengers, a 10.8 percent increase from the previous year.

Hog competition

NC LEXINGTON — Punks-at-sunway Phil could get some competition, from a real hog. Officials in Lexington say their Lil Bit will do the forecasting on Feb. 2.

While groundhog Phil will be looking for his shadow in Pennsylvania, Lil Bit, the 65-pound potbelly pig, will be doing the same in



More butter, please

Veronica Lopez at the Popcorn Factory in Lake Forest, Ill., fills this with popcorn. National Popcorn Day is Jan. 31. Americans on average eat about 68 quarts a year.

Lexington.

Lexington is famous for its pigs, but they're usually smothered in barbecue sauce.

Trail reopened

AZ FLAGSTAFF — A popular trail into the Grand Canyon that was closed because of weather-related rock and land slides has reopened. National Park Service officials are requiring hikers to wear metal spikes on their shoes because of icy conditions. Mule trips on the Bright Angel Trail remain suspended.

Body found after storm

NY NEW YORK — A 70-year-old cab driver who died in his parked taxi just as a blizzard hit the region went undiscovered for three days as snow piled up over his vehicle.

The man, whose name was not released pending family notification, was found in the Gravesend section of Brooklyn, near where he lived, said Sgt. Kevin Ferrell, a police spokesman.

It appeared that he died of a heart attack shortly after parking his car on the street, the same day a winter storm began dumping nearly 18 inches of snow on the city.

Snowplows pushed banks of snow against his car, blocking the view inside. The man's body was discovered only after above-freezing temperatures melted the snow.

Video games banned

MO JEFFERSON CITY — Gov. Matt Blunt banned video games from the state's prisons, a month after a newspaper reported some of Missouri's most violent inmates were allowed to play games simulating murders, car-jackings and the killings of police officers.

Blunt, a Republican who took office two weeks ago, called video games "a luxury that inmates should not be allowed to enjoy."

The ban applies to all video games — violent or not.

The Corrections Department already had removed 35 violent video games from the maximum-security Jefferson City Correctional Center as The Kansas City Star prepared to publish a story about the games in early December.

Secession considered

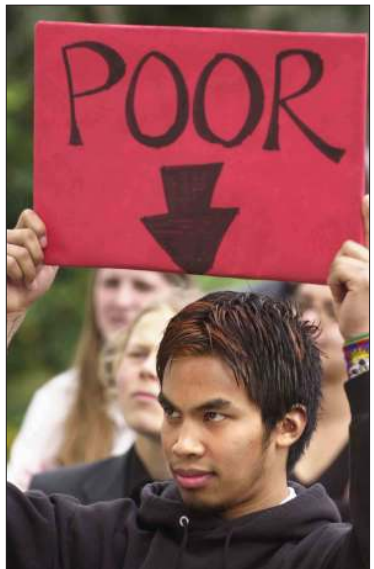
VT WINHALL — Officials in another community want their town to secede from Vermont and join New Hampshire.

The Winhall Selectboard plans to ask voters about the secession idea on Town Meeting Day on March 1.

Town officials believe property taxes in Vermont are too high and the education funding system is flawed. A successful secession vote would send a message to the Legislature, said Selectboard Chairman Frank Pinto.

"It's to make a statement to Montpelier," he said. "We're not happy."

Killington voters approved a proposal last year to merge with New Hampshire after repeated attempts to challenge the state's education law.



Tuition protest

Bud Khuth, Associated Student Government president at Mt. Hood Community College, joins members of the Oregon Student Association to rally for lower tuition rates in Salem, Ore.



Arctic art

Leoncio Medina Rodriguez of Mexico City sculpts a piece titled "Nautilus" at the Budweiser International Snow Sculpture Championships in Breckenridge, Colo.



Jeff Brock unloads a tire for the truck Big Sergeant before a monster truck competition at the Oil Palace in Tyler, Texas.

Tall tires in Tyler



Bubbly youngster

Helen Ball Elementary School kindergarten Saul Sarinana blows soap bubbles as part of the El Paso, Texas, school's Science Expo.



Cooler heads prevail

Robby Woodworth, 10, left, reacts as Kane Rose, 11, dumps snow onto his head after leaving school for the day in Hutchinson, Kan.



Original approach

With the help of 3-foot-tall letters made from hundreds of carnations and the Korbel Perfect Proposal Contest, Kristin Dunn of Boise, Idaho, turned the tables on tradition by popping the question to her unsuspecting boyfriend, Tim Szofran. He said yes.

Danger on drawbridge

FL HALLANDALE BEACH — A 79-year-old woman suffered only bruises after a drawbridge opened beneath her as she walked across it, leaving her dangling from the structure.

Helen Koton said she did not hear any warning signals before the bridge began to open with her nearly halfway across. She said she was able to grab the railing.

As the bridge rose to its full height, motorists got out of their cars and told the bridge attendant, who lowered the span after several minutes.

"Finally, I came down. When I came down, I fell on my face, so I bruised my forehead and my nose," she told Miami television station WSVN.

Fired for smoking

MI LANSING — Four employees of a health care company have been fired for refusing to take a test to determine whether they smoke cigarettes.

Weyco Inc., a health benefits administrator based in Okemos, Mich., adopted a policy Jan. 1 that allows employees to be fired if they smoke, even if the smoking happens after business hours or at home.

Company founder Howard Weyers has said the anti-smoking rule was designed to shield the firm from high health-care costs. "I don't want to pay for the results of smoking," he said.

The rule led one employee to quit before the policy was adopted. Four others were fired when they balked at the smoking test.

Chief Financial Officer Gary Climes estimated that 18 to 20 of the company's 200 employees were smokers when the policy was announced in 2003. Of those, as many as 14 quit smoking before the policy went into effect. The company offered them help to kick the habit.

Young, white, rich, drunk

NY NEW YORK — Young, white Manhattan residents with household incomes at or above \$50,000 are more likely than average to be excessive drinkers, while nearly half of city residents never drink at all, according to a study by the city health department.

Some 23 percent of adults age 18 to 24 and 20 percent of those 25 to 44 report drinking to excess — defined as more than two drinks a day for men and more than one a day for women, the study said.

By comparison, only 11 percent of those 45 to 64 and 6 percent of those 65 or older say they drink excessively.

In Manhattan, 22 percent of residents describe themselves as excessive drinkers — the highest percentage among New York's five boroughs and twice the rate recorded in the Bronx, where 11 percent report drinking heavily.

Messages mixed

WA OLYMPIA — The secretary of state's message is being lost in translation.

Washington state residents say the office's Web-based translation software is creating some odd turns of phrase when it takes the English version of information and puts it into Chinese or Korean.

For example, a statement about Secretary of State Sam Reed proposing "statewide mandates to restore public trust" became "Swampy weed suggests whole state order recover open trust" in Chinese and "A plant reed proposes national mandate to recover public property trust" in Korean.

A Chinese translation option was removed from the Web site on Jan. 12 and Korean got the heave-ho later without word on whether or when they would be restored.

"It's not a perfect system, but the best it can," said Matthew Edwards, the agency's webmaster. "We pulled it because of the complaints. If it's totally confusing, it's worthless."

Alleged activist gunplay

TX WACO — A longtime Republican Party activist has been indicted on charges of shooting at workers cutting down trees at her Woodway home.

Carolyn Payne Lomax, 63, was indicted on two counts of aggravated assault in a 2004 incident when Asplundh Co. workers were trimming trees around utility lines for utility company Oncor.

Lomax has said no one from the company contacted her before workers "butchered" her trees.

Lomax said the workers appeared to be mocking her in Spanish. After repeated pleas, she said, she went inside and grabbed a 22-caliber pistol.

"I went back out in the yard and I said, 'I have a gun. Get off of my property. You're trespassing,'" Lomax said. "They laughed, and they continued to cut."

Lomax said she fired two or three shots and called police to report the trespassing.

No one was injured.

Prostitution arrests

NY NEW YORK — A prostitution ring that netted roughly \$30 million over the last decade and operated out of five midtown Manhattan apartments was busted with the arrest of 25 people believed to be involved, police said.

Those arrested included several female prostitutes, as well as a number of men charged with an assortment of crimes, said Sgt. Kevin Hayes.

The escort service was called Julie's of New York City, Hayes said.

Elderly woman Tasered

SC ROCK HILL — A police officer used a stun gun on a 75-year-old woman who became distraught when she could not locate a sick friend at a nursing home, according to an internal report.

Officer Hattie Jean Macon received a verbal warning and was required to attend a Taser retraining course after the investigation found she acted prematurely when she used the 50,000-volt Taser, according to the report.

Macon was called to the nursing home after Margaret Kimbrell refused to leave. Kimbrell has said she was distraught after the staff would not disclose the location of her sick friend, and she became concerned the friend resided there.

Kimbrell was charged with trespassing and resisting arrest. Her lawyer said she may sue the department.

Stories and photos from wire services

Horoscope

Jupiter in Libra (since Sept. 24) has been fabulously lucky for partnerships of all kinds, but that luck takes on a different tone now, as Big Daddy Jupiter stations to prepare for a retrograde transit. Partnerships have more to offer than you thought. A keen awareness will reveal where you should mine for more relationship gold.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(February 1). This year, you will achieve a long-held wish to a dream destination. October finds you making great progress towards a spiritual path, while November resolves a legal issue to your liking.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). A creative project brings you immense joy and possibly a good deal of money, too! Stand back and admire your own handwork. Luck is with you if you're looking for love — an encounter with your soul mate is very possible.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). A situation involving a parent is amicably resolved to your satisfaction. This is particularly true of matters pertaining to elderly care. You're in the right place at the right time. Home provides much-needed peace and solace.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You're invigorated, charged up and ready to tackle whatever comes your way! People in your neighborhood seem especially attracted to your charisma. Even your most sultry sibling looks favorably upon you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Watch for money in your mailbox. A financial situation that's been in the works for weeks — possibly months — is likely to wrap up, and your efforts could bear golden fruit. It's best to remain humble and keep that hungry attitude.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). A huge personal breakthrough is on the agenda for you, lucky lion! This marks the culmination of one phase

of your life and the beginning of a whole new and glorious adventure. Whatever you do today has major staying power.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Something that's been buried in your subconscious may rise to the surface and poke you out of your comfort zone. It could be the answer to a question you've been puzzling over. Pay attention.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You feel like partying! Whether you're the host or the guest, you're sure to benefit from socializing with friends and likeminded individuals. A trip across town or across the globe brings you insights into a moral dilemma.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A career matter reaches its grand finale, bringing with it potential for profit. From this point on, you may be playing in a whole different ball league, one in which you're calling all the shots. A confident Aquarius is favored for love.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). There's a lull in the action. Use this opportunity to search your soul. Re-evaluate your priorities and your values to make sure they're not outdated. Take the time to adjust as necessary.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You're in prime position to take advantage of other people's money. Someone with deep pockets could very well offer to fund your pet project. Be sure to buy a lottery ticket or two. You can't win unless you play.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Marriage is in the air. If you're in a committed relationship, your beloved could pop the question or accept your proposal! If single, you could meet your future spouse. A business partner makes a significant and enticing offer.

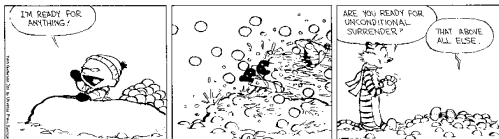
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Those long hours you've been keeping and the stress you've been under do not a happy baby make. Slow down the pace. Take a hot bath. Rest up. An ounce of prevention now will save you from illness later.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



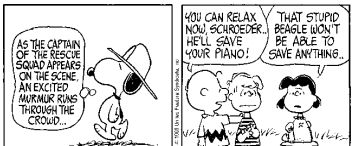
Red and Rover



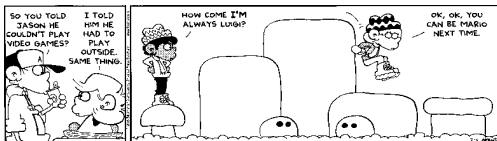
Better or Worse



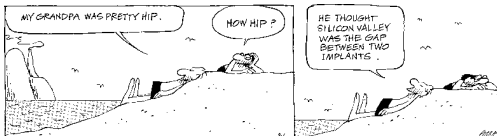
Peanuts



Fox Trot



B.C.



Baby Bites



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



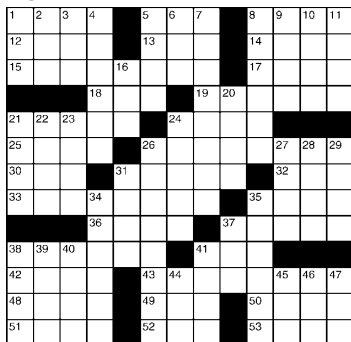
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Smile broadly
- 5 Toss into the mix
- 8 Calamine target
- 12 Language of Pakistan
- 13 Maui memento
- 14 Leak slowly
- 15 "While you were out" stack
- 17 Sketch
- 18 Air-monitoring org.
- 19 Wire-bending tool
- 21 Cross swords
- 24 Hoodlum
- 25 Leeway
- 26 Abated
- 30 Rushmore face
- 31 Actress Claire
- 32 Historic period
- 33 Steel-making pioneer
- 35 Duel tool
- 36 Recedes
- 37 Chop finely
- 38 Nap
- 41 Grecian vessel
- 42 Writer Quindlen
- 43 Meetings
- 48 Read cursorily
- 49 Ball-bearing item
- 50 Send packing
- 51 Literary London villain

Down

- 13 Hobo
- 2 Earlier than
- 3 Billboards
- 4 Field-trip venue, often
- 5 Plankton component
- 6 Scottish river
- 7 Arranger
- 8 Antiseptic
- 9 Sped off
- 10 Despot
- 11 Chops
- 16 Gorilla
- 20 Privation
- 22 Judicial raiment
- 23 Leaves
- 24 Splicer's materials
- 26 Whips
- 27 Night light
- 28 — the Red
- 29 Evans or Earnhardt
- 31 Chapter 11 cause
- 34 Oscar's street
- 35 End
- 37 "— Doubtfire"
- 38 Obi, for one
- 39 Black
- 40 Oklahoma city
- 41 Works with
- 44 Moray
- 45 "Eureka!"
- 46 Without further ado
- 47 Scale member

Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-1

CRYPTOQUIP

J R E Q I H G N X G E Q U S U A U I
T P E X T U O G P P A R B N
B P S P H I X . Q O X S S X J " P J P E

Q I G N X B P R E G ! !

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: OUR EMPLOYMENT AGENCY HAS ADOPTED A NEW SLOGAN: "WE PUT PEOPLE IN THEIR PLACES!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals O

The humor of the hospital gown

Dear Readers: Believe it or not, I'm still getting mail regarding the letters I printed about hospital gowns.

Some of them gave me a chuckle, and I thought I'd share them with you. So pour yourselves a cup of coffee or tea, sit back, and as they say, "Bottoms up!"

Dear Abby: Twenty years ago, I was in the hospital going through a miscarriage, wearing a hospital gown. My roommate was a large woman who complained to the nurse that hers barely covered her. I told them we were wearing designer gowns.

My roommate responded that it might not be true — her — looked like a regular gown to her. I told

her ours were made by "Jordans." Once she stopping laughing, the nurse said she thought I'd emotionally and physically survive the miscarriage if I could make a joke at a time like that.

Two years later, I became pregnant with my son, who's a high school senior this year. Even if you can't print this, I thought you would get a laugh from it.

— You Can Laugh or You Can Cry

Dear You: I did — and I want you to know I admire your strength in the face of adversity.

Dear Abby: Your column about hospital gowns reminded

me of an item that appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Green Sheet years ago.

"Did you know that hospital gowns come in three sizes? Short, shorter, and don't bend over!"

— A. Beversdorf, Milwaukee

Dear A: No, but that sounds like good advice to me.

Dear Abby: After reading the letters about hospital gowns, I wondered if your readers know that the first hospital gown was designed by a man named Seymour Heiny.

— R. McA., Johnstown, PA.
Dear R: A true visionary.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.ueppress.com/dearabby>
Universal Press Syndicate

Dear Abby



Trouble with long-distance wife

Dear Annie: I am 65 years old and in a rather unusual position. My wife, "Lisa," works at an office three hours away. Lisa rented an apartment near her office and began to commute home on the weekends. That was eight years ago. Things reached the point where Lisa comes home only for holidays or social engagements.

When she does come home, it ushers in a whole new load of issues. Lisa is in a high-ranking position at work and used to having control over everyone. She tells me what to do and what to fix around the house. The worst is how she treats our housekeeper. Lisa makes a list of all the dirty spots the housekeeper has to clean the next time she comes. It's become so intolerable that we have shouting matches in front of our grandchildren.

Should I just make our separation legal? Is therapy in order here? — Fed Up in the Southeast
Dear Fed Up: We would never eschew therapy, although it would be best if it included Lisa. Chances are, your wife is asserting her authority with such belligerence because she feels guilty

and is trying to make up for her absence. Also, she fears losing her position in the family and wants to make sure you remember.

Instead of shouting, try calmly explaining to Lisa why her take-charge attitude is causing a problem. You also might ask her to re-evaluate the importance of her job versus your marriage. Sounds like one of them is going to lose out.

Dear Annie: I'm writing in response to "Not Only a Boys' Team Anyone," whose daughter, "Lanie," is the only girl on her baseball team.

When I was 8 years old, I also played on a boys' baseball team, and at first, everyone was weird about me being the only girl. But after I showed them that their remarks didn't bother me and only made me want to be better, they were on my side.

Thanks to all that, I started playing girls' fast-pitch softball in middle school, then varsity fast pitch in high school. I just finished my first year of collegiate softball. To Lanie, I say, don't let their remarks burn you

up. Be strong, and show the boys that baseball isn't just a boy's sport anymore. Best of luck.

— Arizona Softball
Dear Arizona: Good for you. Your words of encouragement will inspire Lanie and all girls in her position. Here's one more:

Dear Annie: I was a Little League coach and I, too, had a girl on my team and a boy who was a bully, with a father to match. Every time the bully would say hurtful things, I would make him apologize and then run laps. His father didn't like this and had words with me. I informed Dad that there was no "I" in "team," and if he did not like my discipline, he could take his son home and not come back. I also told the father that if he continued to give his two cents to my players, I would remove his son from the team and have him banned from the league. We had no more problems from the father after that, and his son was in tip-top shape from all the laps he ran.

Coach in Corona, Calif.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 577 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.
Creators Syndicate

Annie's Mailbox



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

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TELLU

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THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



Now arrange the circled letters to form the Surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A

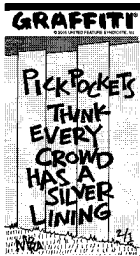
(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: AGLOW GLADE AMAZON DONKEY
Answer: What he ended up with when he ate all the doughnuts — A "GLAZED" LOOK

Family Circus



"What point does the new year get old?"

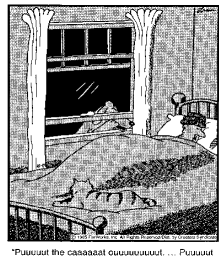


Dennis the Menace



Gary Larson

The Far Side

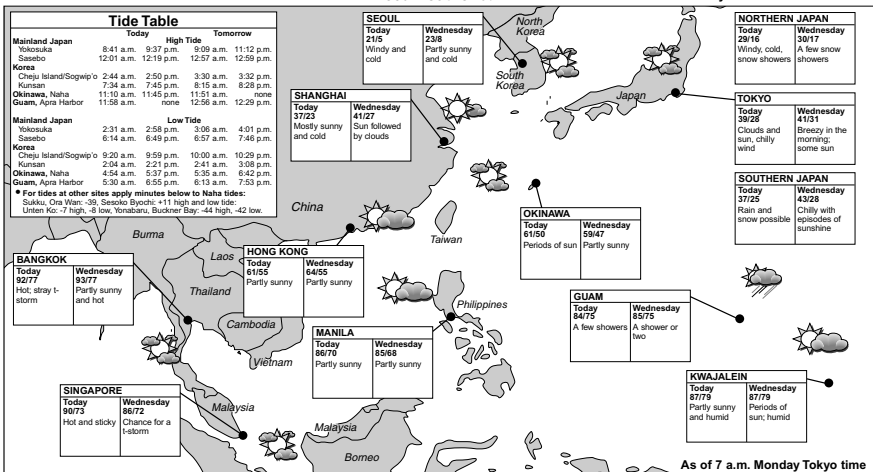


Non Sequitur



The Pacific Forecast

AccuWeather.com

Forecasts and graphics, provided
by AccuWeather.com ©2005

Extended Forecasts

TOKYO

Thursday: Periods of clouds and sunshine,
high 44, low 32.
Friday: Partly sunny,
high 43, low 33.

KADENA

Thursday: Periods of clouds and sunshine,
high 64, low 56.
Friday: Showers,
high 69, low 62.

SEoul

Thursday: Mostly sunny,
high 27, low 14.
Friday: Periods of clouds and sunshine,
high 29, low 17.

MANILA

Thursday: Mostly sunny,
high 85, low 66.
Friday: Mostly sunny,
high 86, low 69.

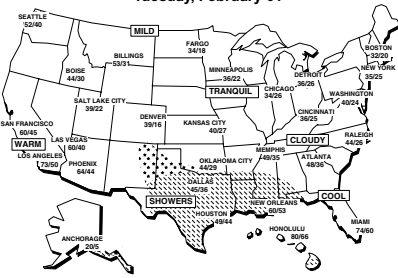
HAGATNA

Thursday: Periods of clouds and sunshine,
high 86, low 77.
Friday: Periods of clouds and sun,
high 86, low 77.

Sunday's USA Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Albuquerque	44/20	Los Angeles	67/48
Amarillo	33/27	Little Rock	48/35
Anchorage	26/13	Louisville	41/26
Asheville	43/28	Miami	79/58
Baltimore	36/22	Milwaukee	33/23
Birmingham	51/34	Nashville	43/32
Bismarck	41/26	New York	37/22
Boise	44/26	Omaha	33/25
Boston	38/22	Orlando	79/46
Brownsville	81/65	Philadelphia	36/22
Buffalo	34/14	Phoenix	60/46
Burlington	29/23	Pittsburgh	39/16
Charleston, SC	53/35	Portland, OR	54/42
Charlotte	42/30	Portland, ME	35/59
Cleveland	33/17	Salt Lake City	41/27
Columbus, OH	39/19	St. Louis	41/26
Duluth	32/21	San Antonio	51/46
El Paso	55/31	San Diego	65/48
Hartford	38/14	San Juan	79/70
Helena	47/22	Tampa	74/50
Indianapolis	37/21	Tulsa	40/30
Jacksonville	64/38	Washington, DC	37/26
Kansas City	36/28	Wichita	37/29

Tuesday, February 01



U.S. Extended Forecast

High pressure will dominate much of the country on Tuesday. Some rain will fall in southern sections of Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. A few flurries will fly in the mountains of Idaho, Wyoming and Montana, as well as in northern Michigan. The rain in the Deep South will press eastward, developing into a coastal system with rain and wind, and possibly even some snow inland, by Friday. Some of this moisture may make it into the mid-Atlantic and Northeast by Friday. A couple of Alberta Clippers may skirt the northern Plains and Great Lakes with light snow or flurries on Thursday and Friday. An active storm track into the Pacific Northwest will keep rain and mountain snow in Washington and Oregon through the end of the week.

Tuesday's Pacific Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Bangkok	92/77	Sasebo NB	35/23
Beijing	28/10	Sapporo	29/16
Camp Casey	19/5	Seoul	21/5
Christchurch	72/54	Shanghai	37/23
Diego Garcia	86/75	Singapore	90/73
Hagatna	84/75	Sydney	89/72
Hanoi	68/62	Taegu	23/12
Hong Kong	61/55	Taipei	59/45
Honolulu	80/66	Tokyo	39/28
		Pusan	25/17

Tuesday's World Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Acapulco	89/71	Budapest	33/18	Kabul	41/19	Nairobi	88/57
Athens	47/35	Buenos Aires	70/51	Kiev	20/10	New Delhi	71/43
Auckland	75/63	Cairo	66/40	Kuwait	80/58	Oslo	33/25
Baghdad	74/42	Cancun	83/68	London	50/41	Paris	45/32
Barbados	86/70	Cape Town	82/66	Madrid	50/37	Rio de Janeiro	79/59
Barcelona	51/41	Geneva	39/27	Mexico City	67/40	Rome	52/36
Berlin	35/26	Istanbul	33/25	Montreal	27/19	St. Petersburg	31/23
Bermuda	66/51	Jerusalem	59/43	Mogadishu	88/73	Stockholm	13/2
Brussels	44/32	Johannesburg	83/60	Moscow	28/10	Tokyo	96/69
Calcutta	70/42	Khartoum	80/58	Warsaw	31/23		



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SOREBOARD

SCOREBOARD, From Page 25

SOUTH

Alcorn St. 46, Southern U. 24
 Barry 58, Del. State 44
 Armstrong Atlantic St. 75, N. Pembroke 52
 Austin, Miss. 61, College of Charleston 66

Belhaven 60, St. Leo 46
 Belhaven 90, Southern, No. 86, OT
 Boone 68, Del. State 65
 Birmingham-Southern 68, Winthrop 46

Brainerd 59, Va. Tech 70
 Campbellsville 53, Lindsey Wilson 46
 Catawba 74, Presbyterian 68

Charleston So. 67, Coastal Carolina 50
 Chattanooga 67, ETSD 64
 Coker 50, Hampton 60

Davenport 65, Georgia Southern 36
 Del. State 47, Florida 60
 E. Kentucky 73, Tenn.-Martin 63

Florida Gulf Coast 57, Jacksonville 61
 Fayetteville St. 55, St. P's 66
 Georgia 57, Georgia Tech 66

Florida Atlantic 67, St. John's 66
 Georgetown 76, Bk. Pikeville 37
 Georgia St. 77, Gardner-Webb 60

Greenville 64, Ark.-Pine Bluff 56
 Point 61, N.-Auburn 52
 Howard 66, Bethune-Cookman 58

William 67, U. of S. 67
 Lee 59, Southern Wesleyan 66
 Lincoln Memorial 70, West Georgia 61

Longwood 64, Savannah 53
 Middle Tennessee 88, Eastern Okla. 66
 Norfolk 70, Toledo 50

NCWU 68, Jackson 51
 Marshall 73, Toledo 50
 Mercer 68, Campbell 48

Missouri State 68, Christian 66
 Middle Tennessee 65, New Mexico 51
 Montana State 55, New Mexico 51

Montevallo 57, West Alabama 53
 N. Carolina 67, Texas 66
 N. Carolina 56, Averett 42

North Carolina 71, Miami 57
 N. Carolina 56, Roberts 62, UMKC 66
 Norfolk 57, Morgan 57

North Carolina 63, Rice 66
 North Carolina 57, Florida Tech 46
 North Carolina 66, Wake Forest 56

Roanoke 47, Washington & Lee 46
 Spalding 57, Eckerd 40
 SUNY-Farmington 67, Centenary, N.J. 78

Spalding 68, Knoxville 48
 Thomas 65, Umm 46
 Tennessee Tech 60, Tennessee 48

Thomas 60, Wisc.-Platteville 66
 Troy 66, Lipscomb 59
 Tusculum 60, Furman 65

Union 60, Tenn. 60, Cumberland, Tenn. 61
 W. Carolina 62, Coll. of Charleston 59
 W. Carolina 62, N. Carolina 66

Warner Southern 70, Webber 62
 West Virginia 68, Valdosta State 66
 Wofford 47, Elon 60

MIDWEST

Akron 74, W. Michigan 70
 Ball State 62, Alma 47
 Allegheny 69, Ohio Wesleyan 58

Anshand 65, Findlay 61
 Augsburg 65, Bethel 65
 Augustana 67, Carthage 66

Augsburg 62, N. Indiana 66
 Baldwin-Wallace 68, Marietta 44
 Ball State 62, N. Indiana 66

Bethel 62, N. Indiana 66
 Buena Vista 78, Cornell, Iowa 51
 Carleton 64, Benedict 57

Central Michigan 66, Mount Vernon Nazarene 50
 Central Michigan 68, N. Illinois 58
 Central Michigan 73, Pittsburg 50

Central St. 61, Wayne, Mich. 60
 Clarke 50, Aurora 63
 Columbia, Mo. 71, William Woods 65

Concordia, Mich. 66, Concordia, Ill. 65
 Crown 77, Minn.-Morris 55
 Dakota 72, Black Hills 61, OT

Duquesne 76, Franklin 60
 Denison 73, Hiram 50
 Duquesne 76, Franklin 60

Edgewood 65, Marquette Baptist 63
 Edgewood 65, Marquette Baptist 63
 Evangel 66, Coker 60

Evangel 66, Coker 60
 Evansville 72, Calhoun 56
 Hanover 61, Bluffton 60

Hastings 62, Dakota Wesleyan 65
 Hillsdale 68, Ohio Northern 33
 Hillsdale 68, Gannon 83

Hopkins 63, Kalamazoo 66
 Huntington 66, Taylor 61
 Illinois State 62, S. Illinois 66

Illinois College 64, Carroll, Wis. 56
 Indiana 62, S. Illinois 66
 Ind.-Purdue, Ind. 60, Chicago 55

Ind.-Purdue, Ind. 60, Chicago 55
 Indiana 62, Evansville 56
 Indianapolis 60, Ball State 66

Iowa Wesleyan 70, William Penn 66
 Iowa Wesleyan 70, William Penn 66
 John Carroll 62, Muskegon 40

John Carroll 62, Muskegon 40
 Kent State 63, Michigan 66
 Kentucky Wesleyan 65, Indiana 63

Kentucky Wesleyan 65, Indiana 63
 Lawrence 65, Michigan Tech 63
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 Taber 64, St. Mary 61

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Leonard wins Hope Classic by three shots

The Associated Press

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Justin Leonard shot a 5-under 67 Sunday to overtake faltering Joe Ogilvie and win the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic.

Golf roundup

Leonard finished the 90-hole tournament at 28-under 332, three shots in front of Ogilvie and Tim Clark of South Africa.

Ogilvie, still winless in six years on the tour, had a closing 73. Clark shot 69.

Coming off his worst year since joining the tour full-time in 1995, former British Open champion Leonard rolled in six birdie putts and had just one bogey in the final round at PGA West's Palmer Course.

He began the day three shots behind the front-running Ogilvie, who had been tied for the lead or alone at the top since the opening round of the five-day event.

Leonard missed the cut last week at Torrey Pines, but the way he finished it may have been an omen. Able to play only 17 holes of his second round Friday because of fog, he was 2 over.

Unlike a half-dozen other players who also weren't going to make the cut and withdrew, Leonard showed up Saturday morning to finish his round — by playing one hole.

He birdied the par 5 and said that he finished because he felt it was the right thing to do, adding, "Plus, look at all the momentum I gave myself for next week."

Leonard finished in the top 10 in just three tournaments last year and dropped to 42nd on the earnings list with \$1.5 million. He failed to win a title for the second time since 1996, and didn't qualify for the Tour Championship for the first time since 1997.

Eight shots back after the third day of the Hope, he made up ground with a fourth-round 64, then caught Ogilvie shortly after the final round began.

Leonard started the day by sinking a pair of birdies that drew him into a tie when Ogilvie started with a bogey and a par. Ogilvie then bogeyed No. 3 and Leonard's par put him alone at the top, where he stayed.

Leonard made the turn with a 3-under 33, and opened a four-shot lead over both Ogilvie and Clark with a birdie at No. 10. Not seriously threatened after another birdie at No. 11, Leonard turned consecutive and parred the final eight holes.

Ogilvie and Clark both birdied No. 18, while Leonard tapped in for par after just missing a 10-footer.

Peter Lonard of Australia, in second place two shots behind Ogilvie to start the day, had putting problems and struggled to a 72, leaving him tied for fourth at 24 under with Loren Roberts, who has a 69.

Defending champion Phil Mickelson, who also won the title in 2002, shot himself out of contention when he hit into the water on the par-4 No. 13 and took a double bogey. His 71 left him tied at 21 under.

Craig Stadler, who won the Hope in 1980

for his first PGA title, shot a closing 69 to finish tied for 14th at 340.

Dougherty wins Caltex Masters

SINGAPORE — England's Nick Dougherty won his first PGA European Tour title Sunday, shooting a 5-under 67 for a five-stroke victory in the Caltex Masters.

The 22-year-old Dougherty had an 18-under 270 total on the Laguna National's Masters Course. Scotland's Colin Montgomerie, the 2004 winner, closed with a 70 to tie for second with Dutchman Maarten Laferber (69).

Denmark's Thomas Bjorn (72) finished fourth at 11 under in the tournament co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour.

"I'm absolutely delighted. When you're playing with Colin and Thomas, you really don't think it's over until it's over," Dougherty said after his bogey-free round. "Hopefully this is start of many great things to come."

Dougherty took control on the 16th hole, hitting his approach shot 3 to 2 feet to set up a birdie that gave him a three-stroke lead. Montgomerie, a stroke back after the 15th, threatened for a bogey on No. 16.

"All in all, I think I just about played good enough golf today," Dougherty said.

Irwin leads after bogey-free round

KAHUKU, Hawaii — Four-time defending champion Hale Irwin shot a bogey-free 6-under 66 to take a two-stroke lead over Allen Doyle after two rounds of the Turtle Bay Championship.



Justin Leonard chips to the green on the second hole during the final round of the Bob Hope Classic on Sunday.

The 59-year-old Irwin is trying to win his fifth straight and sixth overall victory at Turtle Bay, the Champions Tour's first full-field event of the year.

Irwin putted just 23 times and had six birdies, moving to 11-under 133.

Doyle had just one bogey in his second round, getting three birdies on the front nine and three on the back for a 4-under 68 and a 9-under 135 total.

Boston: City reveling in success

BOSTON, FROM BACK PAGE

Crimson quarterback Ryan Fitzgerald went to the postseason Hula Bowl and Shrine all-star games and is getting attention from NFL scouts.

"It's a tough town, to have to keep up with the Joneses," jokes Harvard head football coach Tim Murphy.

Even the UMass men's basketball team had a moment of glory in December, upsetting defending national champion and Interstate 91 rival Connecticut, then ranked No. 7 in the country.

"I only the Celtics, who have struggled since then, heyday in the 1980s, could get in on the act."

Boston and its sports teams have always seemed to be in the shadow of New York, despite the 16 basketball titles held by the Celtics, the Bruins' five Stanley Cups, and even the Patriots two Super Bowl wins. Only the Red Sox World Series victory seemed to ease that.

"It's changed the way people think of their city," said Brian Perry, wearing a Red Sox cap. "We've worried that we're not a world-class city, but especially since the Red Sox won, we're not quite as down on ourselves."

But O'Nan says it was the Patriots who revived the city's dreams for the Red Sox.

"The Red Sox are THE team in Boston. There are the Red Sox and there's everything else," former



Confetti drops as Boston Red Sox fans cheer on players during a rally in Boston to celebrate the team's World Series championship in October.

Sox pitcher Pedro Martinez — now a New York Met — said this week. "I hope this can help get them (the Patriots) the same respect as the Red Sox because they deserve that."

Tight end Christian Fauria, who played seven seasons with the Seattle Seahawks and is now in his third season with New England, acknowledges the popularity of the Red Sox. But he says life is pretty good in Boston for a Patriot, too.

"This is what I always thought football was going to be like," he said Thursday as the team got back to Super Bowl preparations. "I thought this is where the fans are into it. There's a lot of good stuff going on, a great sports city, so this is what I expected it to be."

AP Sports writers Ronald Brown, Jimmy Golea and Howard Ulsman contributed to this report.

Mets catcher Piazza marries ex-Playmate, 'Baywatch' star

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Mets catcher Mike Piazza married former Playboy Playmate and "Baywatch" star Alicia Rickter in a candlelight church ceremony.

With former Mets pitcher Al Leiter and Detroit Tigers catcher Ivan Rodriguez among the baseball stars in attendance, Piazza and Rickter took their vows at St. Jude's Catholic Church on Saturday before departing a yacht to a lavish reception at nearby Fisher Island.

The 36-year-old catcher's best man was his brother Tony.

Auxiliary Bishop Ignatius Cardinal of the Diocese of Brooklyn in New York performed the ceremony that was attended by about 120 people. He said Piazza was nervous "like a regular groom, but he's OK."

Rickter, 32, wore a white satin Vera Wang gown and was joined by five bridesmaids, including maid of honor Angela Bridges, a "Baywatch" co-star, and Playboy Playmates Brande Roderick and Lisa Dergan.

Player implicated in German soccer-fixing scandal

BERLIN — The first soccer player was implicated in Germany's widening game-fixing scandal Sunday, and prosecutors charged three men arrested in the case with fraud.

Michael Born, the business manager of third-division SC Paderborn, confirmed to The Associ-

Sports briefs

ated Press his team had informed the federation that one of its players was involved with the Croatian betting group allegedly behind the scandal.

Club president Wilfried Finke told Sportbild magazine his player was given money for Paderborn's 4-2 German Cup upset of Bundesliga team Hamburger SV in August. He did not identify the player.

The game was one of at least four reported to have been rigged.

The investigation centers on referee Robert Hoyzer, who is accused of accepting bribes from the betting group. Hoyzer refereed the Paderborn-Hamburg game, which was decided on two controversial penalty kicks.

After Hoyzer was questioned by authorities, police on Friday raided in four places in Berlin, including a cafe where the referee reportedly met with gamblers and bookmakers. Four men were arrested and three charged.

The scandal came to light when four referees tipped off authorities about possibly suspicious activities by Hoyzer. The Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper reported last week that Hoyzer admitted receiving money for rigging three games and also implicated players and other referees. He apparently has said no first division games were involved.

Gatti keeps WBC title with fifth-round knockout

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Arturo Gatti retained his WBC 140-pound title Saturday, stopping "Jesse" James Leija in the fifth round and avoiding the kind of slugs that have made his career.

Before a sellout crowd that cheered his every move, Gatti landed a hard overhand right on a retreating Leija, knocking him down early in the round. But Leija narrowly beat referee Earl Brown's 10-count and got to his feet just as Brown got to 10.

Gatti then teed off on him after that, finally dropping Leija with good with a left hand to the ear that toppled the former 130-pound champion. Leija, of San Antonio, managed to get to his knees but the referee called an end to the fight at 1:48 of the fifth.

The fight set up a possible June bout with unbeaten Floyd Mayweather Jr., that would be the richest of Gatti's career.

Gatti (39-6) has never in trouble, and he was never cast as in many of his previous fights.

At the start of the fifth, he attacked quickly after the opening bell, landing a left, another left and then a right to Leija's head, setting the tempo for what was to come.

Gatti made \$2 million for the second defense of his WBC title. Leija made \$700,000.

After slow start, Safin rolls to title

BY PAUL ALEXANDER
The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Marat Safin just needed a little time to get loosened up against Lleyton Hewitt in the Australian Open final.

And once he overcame a terrible start and put his game on track, Safin proved unstoppable, winning in four sets Sunday night and deflating a crowd hungry for an Australian to win this event.

Safin won his second Grand Slam title, and his first in five years, with a 1-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 victory that helped make up for two finals losses in the Russian's last three appearances at Melbourne Park's hard courts.

"It's really difficult to believe it," Safin said, looking at the winner's trophy. "You need to get to your room, sit down and believe this is yours."

Hewitt was trying to become the first Aussie man to win the Australian Open since Mark Edmondson in 1976, when the event was played on grass at Kooyong.

Looking tight, the fourth-seeded Safin's serve was broken on four backhand errors in his first service game and he won only three points while falling behind 3-0. His biggest weapon, his serve, was erratic and ineffective.

"It's the first set, you really couldn't call it tennis," Safin said. "I didn't believe I could play that badly."

He chalked it up to nerves. "I tried to come down," he said. "Then in the second set, I more or less got it together."

After the third-seeded Hewitt hit a fore-

hand out on match point, the outgoing Safin was surprisingly subdued, making only one first pump.

Safin, who got a good luck cell phone text message from the only other Russian to win a men's Grand Slam title — Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the 1996 French Open and 1999 at Melbourne Park — thanked everyone, including the crowd, "even though 90 percent of you were for Hewitt."

Seventh-seeded Serena Williams downed top-ranked Lindsay Davenport in the women's final Saturday and will rise to second in the new rankings. Australians Scott Draper and Samantha Stosur, a wild-card pair playing together for the first time, won the mixed doubles earlier Sunday, defeating Kevin Ullyett of Zimbabwe and Lel

Huber of South Africa 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (6). Safin won the U.S. Open in 2000 and rose soon afterward to No. 1, then plunged as low as 86th after injuries in 2003. He started his comeback here last year, and avenged his loss in that final to Roger Federer by ending the top-ranked Swiss star's 26-match winning streak in the semifinals.

"You knocked off the guy who's nearly been impossible," said Hewitt, who will rise to No. 2 in the rankings, swapping places with Andy Roddick. "I didn't feel like I played that badly out there. You thoroughly deserve it."

Although he usually feeds off controversy — angering three opponents with his on-court shouts and stare-downs on his way to the final — Hewitt unraveled as Safin raised his game. The sellout crowd urged him on, but Hewitt couldn't feed off their energy this time.

"Some of his hitting from the back of the court late in the third set and then the whole fourth set was pretty incredible," said Hewitt, who began preparing months ago to peak for his home Grand Slam.

"I'll be able to walk out with my head held high that I've given everything," he said. "But right at the moment, I'm human and I'm disappointed. To come that close, train so hard to put yourself in a position, it's hard to take at the moment."

Hewitt was at the top of his game early, zipping from sideline to sideline while committing only one unforced error — to Safin's 13 — in the 23-minute first set and yielding only two points in his four service games. But as Safin got it together, Hewitt started slipping in the second set, yielding an early break and then another at 2-5 to even the match.

With fist pumps and shouts of "Come on! Come on!" Hewitt saved two break points in the first game of the third set as tensions rose and both men's nerves frayed.

Hewitt screamed "No way!" at the umpire in the next game after an overrule on Safin's shot that he thought was long but TV replays showed was on the line.

Safin had his own fist pump and shout of "Vamos!" — Let's go — after one winner, but Hewitt broke serve when he guessed right on Safin's volley and stroked a backhand winner down the line. Safin sent a forehead long on the next point.

Safin, notorious for breaking rackets, spiked another one, but continued to play with it. He got his thighs massaged during the changeover after Hewitt held serve for a 3-0 lead, then complained to umpire Carlos Ramos in Spanish about another close call in the next game.

Hewitt was called for a foot fault on his first serve at 4-2, 30-40. He won the point after a long rally, then was given a code vio-



Marat Safin reacts to beating Lleyton Hewitt in the Australian Open final.

lation for unsportsmanlike conduct for screaming as he pointed at the line judge responsible for the call. Safin got back on serve on his third break point with a backhand winner down the line. Safin complained again to Ramos during the changeover.

Hewitt seemed to unravel. He foot-faulted again at 15-30 in his next service game and double-faulted at 30-40. Handed a 5-4 lead, Safin held serve for the set.

This time, it was Hewitt who sought a massage on the thigh muscles that have given him trouble throughout the tournament.

Safin, suddenly looking confident, rallied from a 40-15 deficit as Hewitt served in the first game of the fourth set, finishing off the break with an overhead winner and a backhand cross-court.

It was the only break Safin needed, as he yielded only three points in his five service games in the set.

Paer son wins super-G; three Americans place in top 10

BY ERICA BULMAN
The Associated Press

SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA, Italy — Sweden's Anja Paerson won the super-G slalom in the Alpine World Ski Championships on Sunday for her first major international title in a speed race.

Julia Mancuso of the United States finished third in an event in which Americans placed three skiers in the top 10.

Paerson, a technical specialist who added the downhill and super-G to her repertoire only last season, tore down the Deborah Compagnon course in 1 minute, 17.64 seconds.

"This is unbelievable. I really hadn't counted on it," Paerson said. "Before the race, the most I had speculated was a third place. I was so nervous at the start. I gave everything, risked everything."

"This year, I fought so hard and trained so much and it's not paying off. That I am now the world champion is unbelievable."

Lucia Recchia of Italy was second in 1:18.09 and Mancuso finished third in 1:18.40. For the United States, Lindsey Kildow was ninth and Kristen Clark 10th.

"Not perfect but I didn't make any mistakes as big as everyone else's," Mancuso said. "I thought it might be grippier, but it was fast and I made some turns from that going a little straighter than I wanted in some places."

Kildow made several costly mistakes, veering exceptionally wide on one gate midway down.

World Cup super-G leader Renate Goetsch led a pole at the top of the hill and finished 2.29 seconds off the pace. Two other Austrians, Michaela Dorfmeister and Alexandra Meissnitzer, went off course, missing a gate entirely.

"The steep rock slope, where Michaela and



Julia Mancuso of the United States waves her national flag as she celebrates placing third in the super-G of the Alpine Ski World Championships in Santa Caterina Valfurva, Italy, on Sunday.

Alexandra went off course, was difficult, the curve comes so fast," Paerson said. "I also had problems there."

Hilde Gerg of Germany also had a difficult run that left her 1.43 slack.

"Even with an error-free run today, it was not possible for the later starters," Gerg said.

Three Italians finished in the top five, with Nadia Fanchini fourth in 1:18.43 and Isolde Kostner fifth in 1:18.54.

Paerson won last season's overall World Cup title largely on her strength in the technical disciplines. She also is the defending slalom and giant slalom World Cup champion. She has won only two World Cup races this season, a slalom in Maribor, Slovenia, this month and the season-opening giant slalom in Soelden, Austria.

World Alpine Championships

Sunday	
At Santa Caterina Valfurva, Italy	
Men	Women
Super-G	Super-G
1. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 1:17.64 seconds.	1. Lucia Recchia, Italy, 1:18.09.
2. Julia Mancuso, United States, 1:18.40.	2. Nadia Fanchini, Italy, 1:18.43.
3. Isolde Kostner, Italy, 1:18.54.	3. Renate Goetsch, Austria, 1:18.54.
4. Tina Maze, Slovenia, 1:18.67.	4. Nadia Styger, Switzerland, 1:18.79.
5. Andreas Fischbacher, Austria, 1:18.73.	5. Lindsey Kildow, United States, 1:18.82.
6. Kirsten Clark, United States, 1:18.94.	6. Silvia Berger, Austria, 1:19.00.
7. Caroline Lalive, United States, 1:19.03.	7. Hilde Gerg, Germany, 1:19.07.
8. Karen Putzer, Italy, 1:19.18.	8. Carolina Ruiz-Castillo, Spain, 1:19.15.
9. Sylviane Berthod, Switzerland, 1:19.20.	9. Lucie Hrstkova, Czech Republic, 1:19.24.
10. Franziska Audenblatten, Switzerland, 1:19.33.	10. Jessica Lindell-Vikarby, Sweden, 1:19.37.
11. Janette Hargin, Sweden, 1:19.51.	11. Mojca Sudar, Slovenia, 1:21.26.
12. Margit Schauder, Liechtenstein, 1:21.99.	12. Tina Weirather, Liechtenstein, 1:22.08.
13. Emily Brydon, Canada, 1:19.62.	13. Chloé Daccache, Switzerland, 1:19.88.
14. Renate Goetsch, Austria, 1:19.93.	14. Petra Haim, Germany, 1:20.17.
15. Kelly Vandenberg, Canada, 1:20.35.	15. Genevieve Simard, Canada, 1:20.61.
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97. Chloé Daccache, Switzerland, 1:19.88.	97. Emily Brydon, Canada, 1:19.62.
98. Renate Goetsch, Austria, 1:19.93.	98. Petra Haim, Germany, 1:20.17.
99. Kelly Vandenberg, Canada, 1:20.35.	99. Genevieve Simard, Canada, 1:20.61.
100. Genevieve Simard, Canada, 1:20.61.	100. Lucie Hrstkova, Czech Republic, 1:20.94.

Did Not Start

Blanka-Dorotea Narva, Romania.

Martina Ertl, Germany; Carole Monnet-Carlier, France; Alexandra Meissnitzer, Austria; Michaela Dorfmeister, Austria; Allison Forsyth, Canada; Catherine Meissnitzer, Norway.

Apparently no deficit too big for Pitt

Panthers come back from 17 down and top No. 4 Syracuse

BY ALAN ROBINSON
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Syracuse couldn't have asked for a better start as it tried to become the first visiting team to win in successive seasons in Pitt's new arena. The Orange's biggest mistake was letting the game get away long before the finish.

Carl Krauser and Chevon Troutman led Pittsburgh's second consecutive comeback from a 17-point deficit against a ranked opponent, withstanding long scoreless stretches to drive the No. 20 Panthers to a 76-69 victory over fourth-ranked Syracuse on Saturday night.

Pittsburgh, rallying much as it did the previous Saturday in beating then No. 16 Connecticut 76-66, took command by holding Syracuse scoreless for 6½ minutes in a 13-0 run midway through the second half.

The Orange (20-2, 7-1 Big East) opened a 22-5 lead by holding Pitt to two field goals in the first 10 minutes. Syracuse ended Pitt's 40-game home winning streak last season by becoming the first visiting team to win in the Petersen Events Center, which opened for the 2002-03 season.

"It didn't feel like we were down 17," Pitt's Levon Kendall said. "We made a lot of mental mistakes that gave them open shots, and we knew that if we played as well as we could, it wouldn't be a problem coming back. It wasn't anything to get worried about."

Apparently not. Krauser got all of his 19 points in the second half after not scoring for nearly 23 minutes and Troutman, head scorer for the first 14½ minutes, had 18 points and nine rebounds for Pitt (14-3, 4-2). The Panthers outscored Syracuse 39-28.

Keith Benjamin, a seldom-used freshman guard who had scored only two points in Pitt's previous 13 games, keyed the comeback by coming off the bench for 10 points — as many as he had all season.



Pittsburgh's Chris Taft, right, is fouled by Syracuse's Craig Forth in a scramble for a rebound during the first half Saturday night. No. 20 Pittsburgh beat No. 4 Syracuse 76-69.

"It's been a long wait to go out there and show what I could do," said Benjamin, who was slowed earlier by a foot injury. "Coach (Jamie Dixon) gave me an opportunity and I wanted to bring some energy to the team."

Gerry McNamara scored 26 points and Hakim Warrick had 25, but no other Syracuse

player scored more than four as the Orange's 13-game winning streak ended. McNamara went 14 minutes without a basket during the second half before hitting three late three-pointers.

"We can't win with only two guys scoring — we need better balance," Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim said. "People are

going to do what they can to take Gerry and Hakim away, and we need our other guys in those situations. Two guys are not going to win a game in this league."

Boeheim felt the game swung when the Panthers went into a 2-3 zone in the second half — Syracuse's preferred defense — but the Orange still couldn't get open shots.

"We actually wanted them to play the zone, but they made shots and we couldn't," Boeheim said. "Our failure to attack the zone was our biggest shortcoming."

Pitt was 13-for-26 in the second half to Syracuse's 10-for-28.

McNamara went in double figures with 10 points before Pitt made its second field goal of the game, but Benjamin came off the bench to hit two quick baskets and start the Panthers on a 22-9 run that cut Syracuse's lead to 31-27.

Pitt tied it for the first time at 38 on Krauser's second three-pointer in two possessions before Syracuse answered with a quick 6-0 run for a 44-38 lead.

Benjamin's three-pointer and two free throws and Aaron Gray's tap-in started a 13-0 run that put Pitt up by seven. At that point, Pitt had outscored Syracuse 46-22 since trailing by 17.

Dixon went to Benjamin mostly out of desperation after freshman guard Ronald Ramon quickly drew three fouls and starting guard Antonio Graves had trouble getting open shots. Graves failed to score in nine minutes.

"We had a lot of sophomores and freshmen out there and guys who hadn't played a lot, but they played like they had been there in those situations," Dixon said.

The Panthers had lost three of five, including successive home games to Bucknell and Georgetown, before beating Connecticut and Syracuse. The turnaround came when Krauser began hitting down on his turnovers and quit forcing shots.

"In the first half I was looking for my teammates and letting the game come to me," Krauser said. "In the second half, I felt a sense of urgency to get things going."

The Orange, the highest-ranked opponent to play at the Petersen Center, were playing their first ranked opponent since losing to then-No. 5 Oklahoma State 74-60 on Dec. 7.

Jayhawks make it look easy in rout of Texas

BY DOUG TUCKER
The Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Kansas' best game of the season turned out to be Rick Barnes' worst Big 12 loss ever.

With a smothering defense and 27 points from Wayne Simien, No. 6 Kansas romped past No. 16 Texas 90-65 Saturday night, handing Barnes his most lopsided setback in a conference game in seven years with the Longhorns.

"Those are the best two halves we've put together all year, by far," Aaron Miles, Kansas' senior point guard, Aaron Miles, said.

"Offensively, we shared the ball and executed," Miles, the Big 12's career assists leader, said. "Defensively, we played great team defense. We made them take tough shots. That's the key."

The Longhorns (15-5, 4-3), down to eight scholarships players because of injuries and academic problems, were never in it, falling to 0-5 in Allen Fieldhouse since the Big 12 was formed in 1996. They committed a season-high 20 turnovers.

"They were good," Barnes said. "We really didn't give ourselves a chance. In the first half they had 14 points off our turnovers."

Keith Langford had 17 points and Miles had 10 points and eight assists for the Jayhawks (16-1, 6-0), who took over the Big 12 lead with the surprisingly one-sided romp over a team that beat them twice last season.

Keyed by Jeff Hawkins' three-pointer at the buzzer, the Jayhawks closed the first half on a 14-4 run, taking a 43-28 lead.

Determined to keep the momentum, they came out firing in the second half and quickly built the lead to 21 points.

"That's what we were thinking," Miles said. "There have been games this year where we'd be up by 15 points and then we'd let a team back in. We can't be like that. Good teams like Texas can get back in the game, so you have to put your foot on their throat and not let them back in."

Simien started the second half by stealing a pass and then Miles hit a three-pointer. Christian Moody blocked a shot and fed Langford for another basket.

"It was a collective effort. It was probably our most complete game of the season," Simien said.

A moment later, J.R. Giddens hit a three-pointer that put the Jayhawks on top 51-30. Texas got no closer than 16 in the second half.

Barnes' previous worst conference loss was 83-59 at Oklahoma on Jan. 31, 1993.

"They were great tonight," Daniel Gibson, Texas' freshman point guard, said. "They came out aggressive."

Gibson, who went 6-for-6 from behind the arc against Texas Tech on Tuesday night and had averaged almost 22 points in his last three games, had only four points in the first half. He wound up with 19, and earned the respect of the Jayhawks.

"He's going to be a great guard in this conference," Miles said. "When they were down, he kind of took it upon himself to say, 'You know what? OK, I'm going to try to do something.' And he made shots. He made plays in the second half. I like that in a young player."

Jason Klotz and Kenton Paulino each had 12 for the Longhorns, who shot only 37 percent to Kansas' 50 percent.

"That (Kansas) is probably the best team in the Big 12," Klotz said. "They played great."

Texas, after hitting 14 of 21 from beyond the arc in its previous game, made only four of 23 Saturday night.

"Our offense early got us in trouble," Barnes said. "It wasn't our defense."



Kansas coach Bill Self makes a point to an official during the sixth-ranked Jayhawks' 90-65 rout of Texas on Saturday night.

Notre Dame's inside game too much for Connecticut

The Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Torin Francis scored 19 points and Notre Dame used strong inside play to surprise No. 19 Connecticut 78-74 on Sunday.

After shooting 50 percent for most of the game, Connecticut missed its final five shots, including a breakaway layup by Marcus Williams that would have tied the game at 76 with 15 seconds left. Instead, Williams fouled Chris Thomas on the rebound and Thomas made two free throws to give the Irish a four-point lead.

Connecticut (12-5, 4-3 Big East) missed its final two three-point attempts as time ran out, giving Notre Dame its first victory over a ranked team since beating the ninth-ranked Huskies a year ago.

Thomas had 11 of his 15 points in the second half for the Irish (13-5, 5-3), who had lost two straight.

No. 10 Washington 79, Arizona 51, 70: At Tempe, Ariz., Nate Robinson scored 18 of his 23 points in the second half and Washington moved back into a tie with Arizona for first place in the Pac-10.

The Huskies (17-3, 7-2 Pac-10) lost 92-83 at No. 11 Arizona on Thursday night. But Washington State upset Arizona on Saturday, clearing the way for the Huskies to regain a share of the conference lead by beating Arizona State.

Re Dugan had 14 points and 13 rebounds for Arizona State, his 80th double-digit scoring game in his 80-game collegiate career.

Kevin Kruger added 12 points but had five turnovers, while Steve Moore scored 11 and Bryson Krueger 10 for the Sun Devils (15-6, 4-5).

Robinson, bouncing back from a sub-par game at Arizona, was 8-for-12 from the field, including 6-for-8 in the second half, and was 2-for-4 on three-pointers.



Notre Dame's Dennis Latimore (41) attempts to drive past Connecticut's Josh Boone (21) during Sunday's 78-74 upset of the 19th-ranked Huskies.

Men's Top 25 roundup

Tre Simmons scored 15 points and Brandon Roy had 12 for Washington. Jamaal Williams added 11 points, six during the decisive 11-0 second-half run.

In Saturday games:

No. 7 Kentucky 68, Arkansas 67: At Fayetteville, Ark., Patrick Sparks hit what proved to be the deciding basket with 24.2 seconds left as Kentucky (16-2, 7-0 Southeastern Conference) held on.

Eric Ferguson countered Sparks' shot with a three-pointer, pulling Arkansas within a point. The Wildcats' Chuck Hayes missed a free throw, and Ferguson got the rebound but missed a three-point try at the buzzer.

Ronnie Brewer had 18 for Arkansas (14-6, 2-5).

No. 8 Boston College 64, Georgetown 49: At Boston, Craig Smith had 20 points and eight rebounds, and unbeaten Boston College shut out Georgetown for a 15-minute span in the first half.

Jared Dudley scored 13 for BC (18-0, 7-0 Big East), which is one shy of the longest winning streak in school history — 19 straight in 1968-69.

Brandon Bowman scored 16 points for Georgetown (13-4, 5-3). The Hoyas, who lost for just the third time in 12 games, haven't beaten a top 10 team since 1996.

No. 12 Louisville 105, Tulane 69: At New Orleans, Francisco Garcia had 21 points to lead six double-figure scorers as the Cardinals (18-3, 6-2 Conference USA) routed Tulane (8-11, 2-6).

The Cardinals won their seventh straight game and 12th in the last 13. Louisville has won by an average of 32.9 points during its winning streak.

Louisville led by 19 after 10 minutes and pushed the margin to as many as 44. The Cardinals finished with 20 steals, one off the school record.

Iowa St. 74, No. 13 Oklahoma 66: At Ames, Iowa, Curtis Stinson scored 23 points and Aimee Thomas (9-8, 1-5 Big 12) relied on his short-range game to end a 10-game winning streak by Oklahoma (16-3, 5-1). Jared Homan added 14 points for Iowa State, which did not make a basket outside 10 feet but outscored the Sooners 48-28 inside.

Ty Gray led Oklahoma with 21 points.

No. 15 Michigan St. 92, Oakland, Mich. 75: At East Lansing, Mich., Maurice Ager scored 22 points and Michigan State (14-3) pulled away in the second half in its final tuneup for Tuesday's Big Ten showdown with Illinois.

Shannon Brown, Chris Hill and Kelvin Torbert each had 13 points for the Spartans, who have won 11 of their last 12 and all 10 home games this season.

No. 17 Gonzaga 91, Portland 79: At Spokane, Wash., J.P. Batista had 25 points and 12 rebounds and Gonzaga (15-4, 5-2 West Coast Conference) made 34 of 39 free throws to withstand a second-half rally by Portland (12-9, 2-5).

Portland (13-9, 2-5), the last WCC team to beat Gonzaga at home, trailed by as many as 14 in the first half but held several leads in the second half before fading. Pooh Jeter led the Pilots with 22 points.

No. 18 Wisconsin 76, Penn St. 50: At State College, Pa., Kammron Taylor scored 20 points as Wisconsin (14-4, 5-2 Big Ten) beat Penn State (7-13, 1-6). The Badgers bounced back after a loss to top-ranked Illinois that ended a 38-game home winning streak.

Aaron Johnson had 17 points and 11 rebounds for Penn State.

No. 21 Cincinnati 87, Houston 68: At Cincinnati, James White scored a career-high 25 points, making every type of shot, and added 10 rebounds to lead Cincinnati (17-3, 6-1 Conference USA) over Houston (12-9, 3-4).

Jason Maxiell also had 10 rebounds, 14 points and eight blocks, helping the Bearcats roll to their 10th straight victory over a team they traditionally dominate. Houston is 1-22 against Cincinnati, which leaves next season for the Big East.

No. 22 Iowa 72, Indiana 57: At Iowa City, Pierre Pierce, one of four Iowa starters benched at the beginning of the game for lackluster play, scored 25 points to lead the Hawkeyes (15-5, 3-4 Big Ten) past Indiana (9-9, 4-3).



Air Force's Nick Welch, rear, goes up to block a shot by San Diego State's Tyler Smith during the first half of Saturday night's game at the Air Force Academy. Air Force (13-7) beat San Diego State 62-50.

Air Force wins 23rd straight home game

The Associated Press

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — Jacob Burtch scored 16 points and Air Force beat San Diego State 62-50 on Saturday night, the Falcons' 23rd straight victory at home.

Air Force (13-7, 4-1 Mountain West) moved into sole possession of second place in the conference by extending the nation's second-longest home winning streak.

The Falcons started cold from three-point range and trailed by a point at the half.

Air Force's Nick Welch, who finished with 10 points, made a layup with 13:48 left in the game to start a 10-1 run. A three-pointer by Tim Keller put Air Force up 41-30 with 10:10 left to play.

A three-pointer by Marc Holum with 9:14 to play started another run that ended with a three-pointer by Matt McCraw at 2:41 that gave Air Force a 54-37 lead over the Aztecs (9-9, 3-2).

In Sunday games:

Navy 66, Bucknell 62: At Annapolis, Md., Greg Sprink scored 17 points as Navy upset Patriot League leader Bucknell (14-6, 5-2 Patriot), the Middies' second straight victory.

Navy (6-14, 2-5) clinched it by making 10 of 11 free throws down the stretch. Navy took the lead for good at 63-62 with 21.7 seconds to go on two free throws by freshman Corey Johnson. George O'Garra added two free throws with 18 seconds left. Bucknell's Kevin Bettencourt missed a three-pointer with nine seconds to go and Sprink made the clinching free throw with 7.4 seconds to play.

Lafayette 66, Army 49: At Easton, Pa., Sean Knitter and Jamaal Douglas each scored 14 points as Lafayette (6-14, 2-5) won a match of Patriot League tailenders.

Cory Sinning scored 16 points and Matt Bell added 10 points for Army (3-16, 1-6).

Army trailed 36-30 with 14 minutes remaining when Knitter scored on four straight possessions, and Pat Betley's three-pointer gave the Leopards a 47-35 advantage with 8:26 remaining.

SPORTS



Air Force beats
San Diego St. to extend
home win streak, Page 31

Wicked awesome

Boston sports fans finally have something to brag about in more than one sport

BY SYLVIA LEE WINGFIELD
The Associated Press

BOSTON — It's time for Boston sports fans to gloat for a change.

Heck, the Boston Red Sox finally conquered the New York Yankees and then won a World Series. Now the New England Patriots are trying to win their third Super Bowl in four years.

"It doesn't get any better, it really doesn't," said novelist Stewart O'Nan, who collaborated with his friend and fellow Red Sox fan, horror writer Stephen King, on "Faithful," a diary of the 2004 Red Sox season.

Last year began with the Patriots winning the Super Bowl. Then from spring through summer, fans watched as the

Red Sox rebounded from occasional losing streaks only to keep getting better.

They'd grown accustomed to the usual swan dive after the All-Star break. But this time the team went on a tear. Could it actually happen? Could this be "the year" for which generations of die-hard fans had pined? Fall usually brought heartbreak to Boston baseball fans. This time, it brought unmeasurable joy.

The Sox came back from a 3-0 hole in the ALCS to win four straight against the hated Yankees, then swept St. Louis in four games to win the title, their first in 86 years.

It's all made for a fun year for the city's long-suffering fans.

"Everybody's ecstatic," said Adam Herzlich, a Boston bartender holding off the January chill on Thursday with a Patriots watch cap.

"People who weren't Pats fans a few years ago are now. My mother's even watched the playoffs. She hasn't watched that much football since she watched me play," at Brookline High School, he said.

There's more.

The Boston College men's basketball team is one of only two undefeated college teams in the country, and is now ranked No. 8 in The Associated Press rankings. The BC women's basketball team is also in the AP Top 25, and the men's hockey team is ranked No. 1.

SEE BOSTON ON PAGE 27



AP photos

Above: Boston College's Craig Smith reacts as he scores against Georgetown in the first half Saturday. BC is ranked No. 8 in The Associated Press poll and is one of only two undefeated men's teams in the country. Left: The Boston Red Sox ended decades of misery for their fans by winning their first World Series in 86 years.



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady



Russia's Safin earns second Slam title with win over crowd favorite Hewitt in Australian Open

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Heat give Stan Van Gundy 2-1 edge against brother Jeff

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Leonard overtakes faltering Ogilvie to win Hope Classic

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